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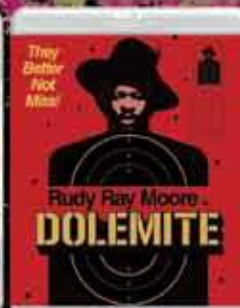
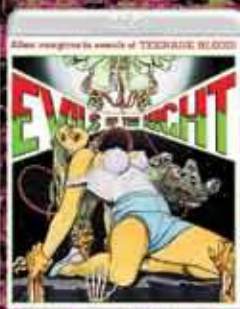
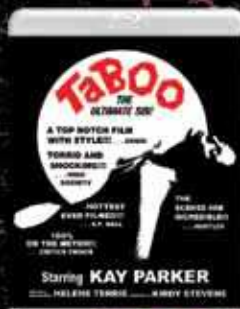
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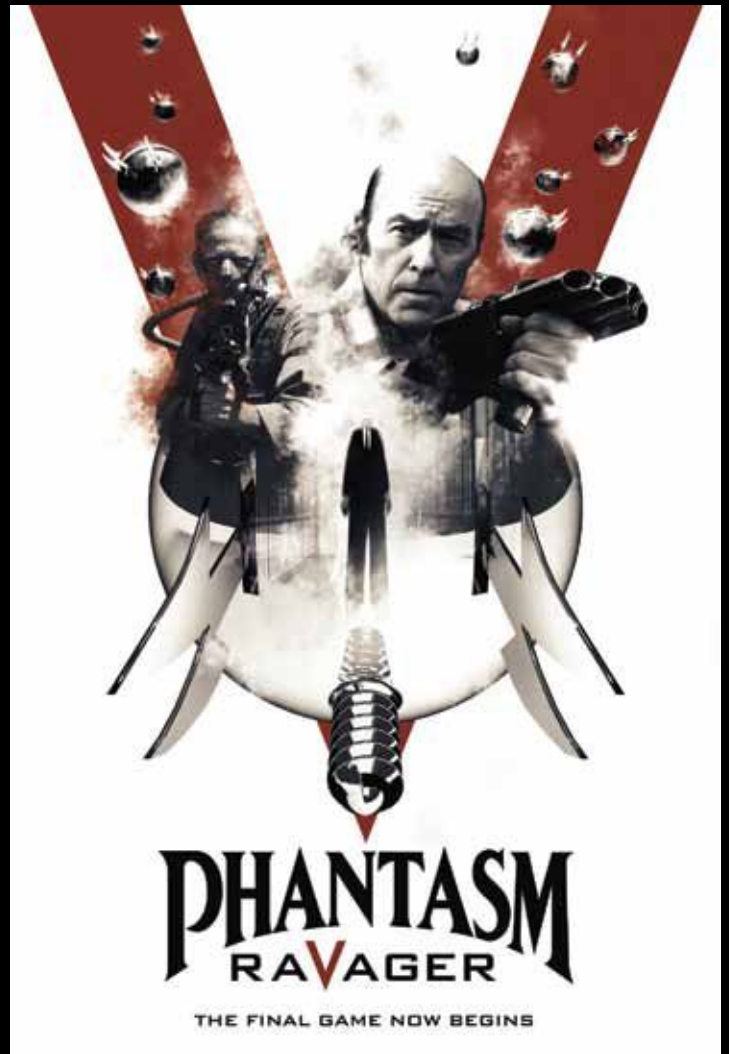
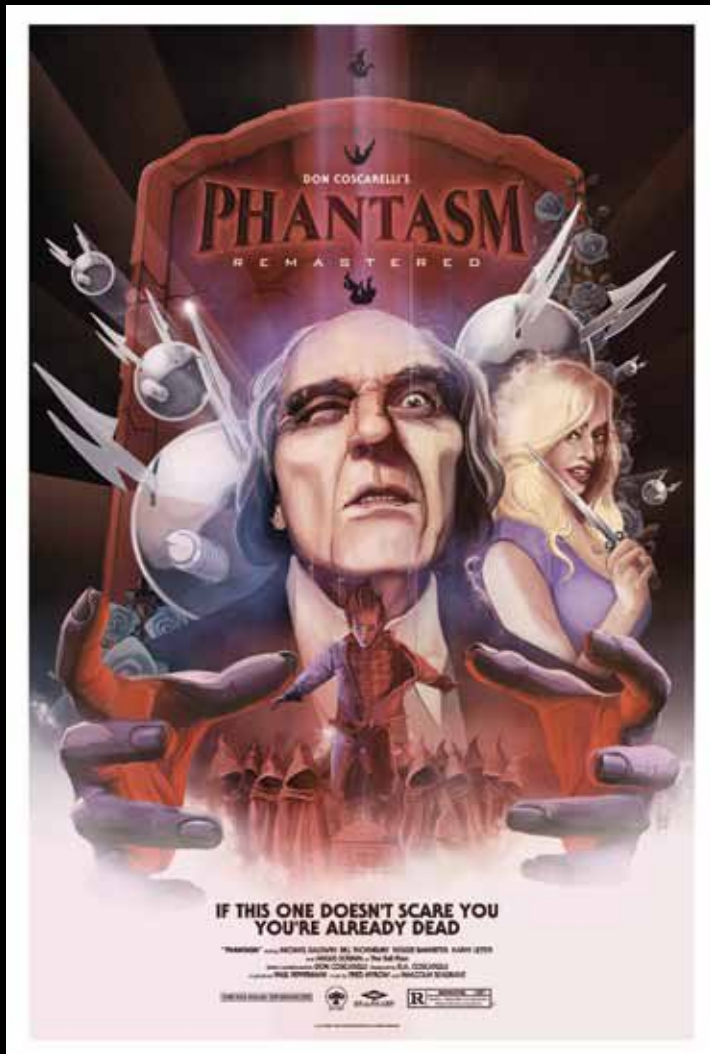
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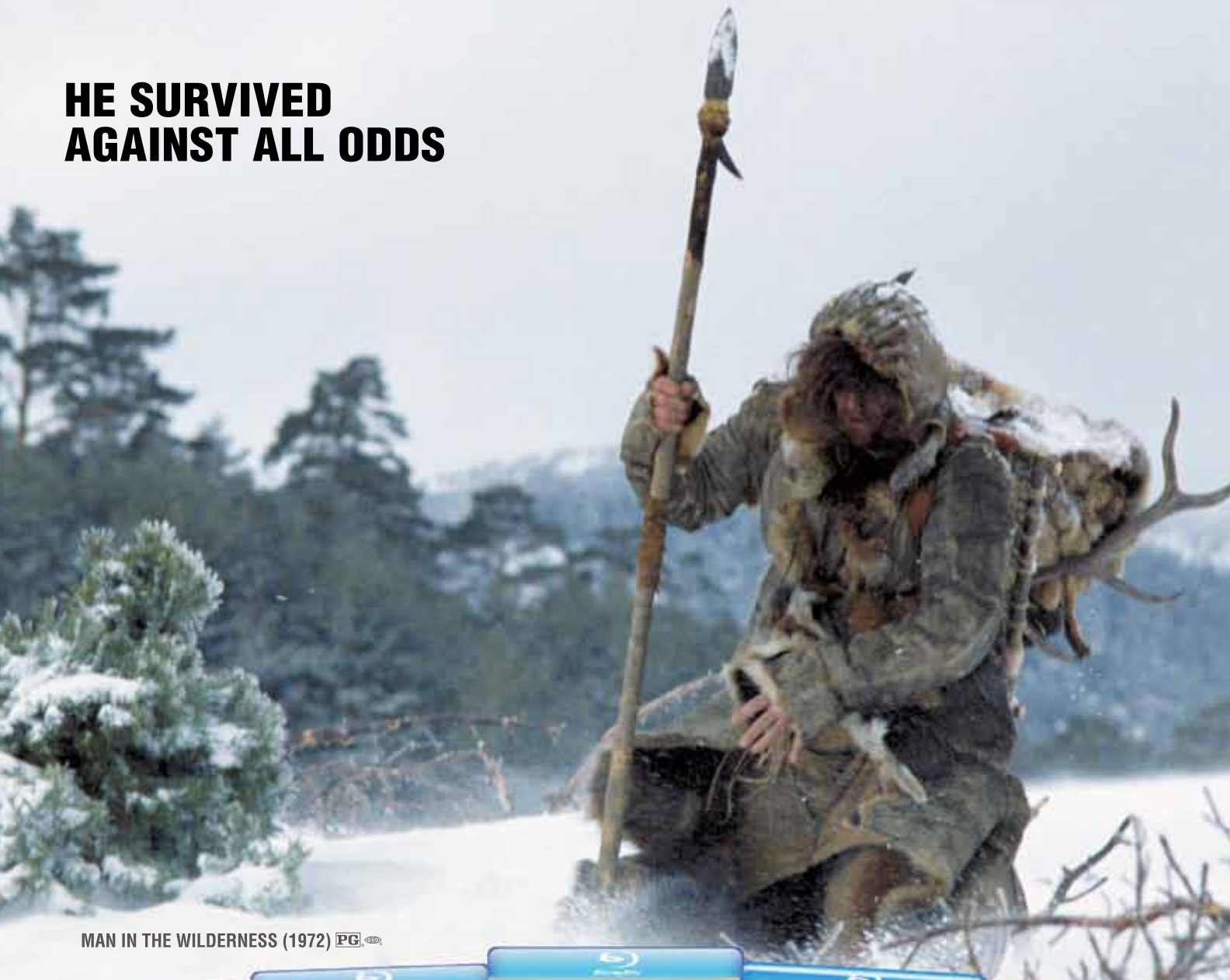
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#### **Dedicated to the Memory and Living Legacy of Christopher Lee**

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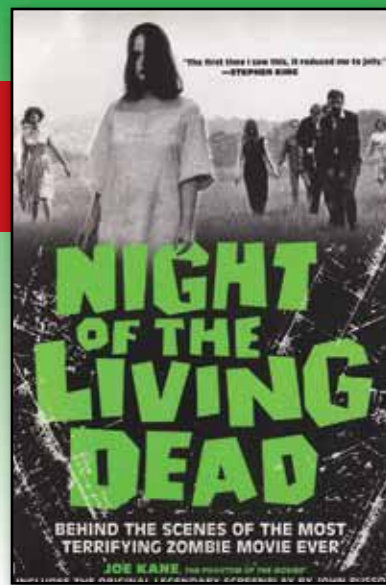
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# The Phantom Speaks!

**TWO SCORE AND** change ago, the stormy wine-dark skies abruptly parted and a thunderous voice boomed from above the heavens. It belonged, of course, to Great Guidance Ro-Man, who commanded a small band of hu-mans to go forth and found **The Phantom of the Movies' VideoScope**, so that the masses might be further enlightened in all matters genre video. Such was it decreed and so mote it be, from that day forward unto perpetuity, or at least as close to it as we can get.

Among that bold band who accepted the command to launch **VideoScope**, first in newsletter format, then in full magazine flower, were *New York Daily News* genre-film critic The Phantom of the Movies, writer Nancy Naglin (aka The Phantomess), and veteran genre journalist Tim Ferrante, who pooled their resources to produce that inaugural effort, appropriately yclept **The Phantom of the Movies'® VideoScope Vol. 1, No. 1** (Jan/Feb 1993). The task of providing content for that debut go-round fell to yours truly, and a draining rush to glory indeed it proved to be. Fortunately, since those humble origins, an ever-expanding roster of writers—over 100 (!) in all over the decades—pitched in with their critical expertise.

Beyond our committed scriveners, we owe our continued existence to our phaitful phans, many of whom have been with us since day one, and loyal advertisers, literally beginning with pioneering cinexploiteers the late, great Mike Vraney and the tireless Lisa Petrucci at Something Weird Video; that seminal label came onboard our first issue and has been with us ever since, joined by scores more purveyors of fine quality VHS, DVD and now Blu-ray fare, genre books, CDs and other related products. Nor could the Phantomship have hoped to stay afloat sans the keen eye and hands of our design consultant and cover wizard Kevin Hein, who signed on when we evolved to magazine format in 1995 and has, in our humble op, topped himself with his cover for this, our Big 100.



Which fast-forwards us to the present. We feel we've assembled a suitable ish with which to celebrate our cine-centric centennial. As ever, our seasonal focus remains firmly on Fall with its traditional digital horror harvest. One-of-a-kind museum creator/curator, makeup master and model maker Cortlandt (Grandnephew of **Werewolf of London** Henry) Hull leads the way with a guided tour of *The Witch's Dungeon*, the spooky pride of Bristol, CT, and a magnet for classic fright-film fans and genre celebrities alike, from Mark Hamill and Sarah (Daughter of Boris) Karloff to Cool Ghoul Zacherley and Victoria (Daughter of Vincent) Price. We likewise crank up the old time machine to revisit a brace of cult-movie milestones and their masterminds: Herk Harvey's peerless 1962 indie **Carnival of Souls**, now available in a newly restored Blu-ray edition from the perfectionists at Criterion Collection, and Don Coscarelli's powerful coming-of-age nightmare **Phantasm**, due, along with sequels and extras, in a deluxe Blu-ray set from Well Go USA on December 6. Next, our Cult Radio A-Go-Go! dad/daughter duo of Terry & Tiffany DuFoe check in with artist/actor Kevin VanHentenryck, iconic star of Frank Henenlotter's funky Fun City frightfest **Basket Case** and sequels **Basket Case 2** and **Basket Case 3: The Progeny**, the latter two out in fresh Blu-ray editions via the dedicated genre archivists at Synapse Films. We also scope out sev-



eral backdate fright delights, from William Castle's **13 Ghosts** (Mill Creek Entertainment) to Lucio Fulci's **Cat in the Brain** (Grindhouse Releasing), issued in new Blu-ray showcases.

Elsewhere, our father/son team of Joseph and Cohen Perry file their exclusive report from the freshly wrapped 2016 Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival, which hosted everything from popular Stateside pics like **Don't Breathe** to such exotic foreign fare as **Sailor Suit and Machine Gun: Graduation**; Dan Cziraky hops aboard the Satellite of Love for a lively session with **MST3K**'s boys and 'bots; dueling cinephiles Tim Ferrante and Scott Voisin debate the merits of Robert Wise's **Odds Against Tomorrow** vs. Tony Scott's Quentin Tarantino-scripted **True Romance**; Nancy Naglin salutes cinema's reigning snark king George Sanders; John Seal looks in the basement and locates the biker rarity **Bury Me an Angel**; Rob Freese experiences extreme **Drive-In Delirium**; and our entire crew of ever-opinionated columnists and crix comment on their latest film findings.

**PHLATSCREEN PHLASHES:** Speaking of film finds, during our unusually hectic run-up to our Big 100 deadline, we did snatch a bit of downtime to catch up with a few worthy flicks that we didn't have space to review in this issue. On the noir front, we recommend Jean Negulesco's 1948 **Road House** (Kino Lorber), starring a literally smokin' Ida Lupino, steady Cornell Wilde and cackling Richard Widmark, an additional pair of sharp '50s crime dramas from Warner Archive's vaults, **The Great Jewel Robber** and **No Questions Asked**, and from Alpha Video the moody 1948 Hugo Haas-style character study **Light-house**. Also high among our faves is Shout! Factory's gala new **The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension** double-disc set, which includes not only a fresh high-def Blu-ray of writer Earl Mac Rauch and director W.D. Richter's surreal head serial but a bonus DVD, a multi-part documentary, featurette, deleted scenes, commentaries and more. Olive Films revives a pair of late-night '50s shockers, **The Monster of Piedras Blancas** (sort of a ruder, cruder **Creature from the Black Lagoon**) and **The Return of Dracula**, starring Francis (Terror Is a Man) Lederer as the bloodthirsty Count, while Kino contributes Edward L. Cahn's fun 1959 sci-fi cheesefest **Invisible Invaders**, with B genre giants John Carradine, Robert Hutton and John Agar, along with reanimated corpses that prefigure George Romero's **Night of the Living Dead**ers.



We likewise enjoyed actor-turned-director Larry Hagman's high-concept (accent on high) 1972 **The Blob** revisit **Beware! The Blob** (Kino), with cameos by Godfrey Cambridge, Shelley Berman, Cindy Williams and Gerritt Graham, Patrick Lussier's zany Nicolas Cage vehicle **Drive Angry** (Summit Entertainment), Ciro Guerra's black-and-white **Heart of Darkness**-type cruise down the Amazon **Embrace of the Serpent**

(Oscilloscope), and Jean-Claude Van Damme's organ-racket actioner **Pound of Flesh** (E One Entertainment). Nostalgia-minded Fun Cityites, meantime, should scope out the extras on Severin Films' new **Dr. Butcher, MD** special edition, highlighted by visual tours of the legendary movie-mad 42nd Street of yore conducted by filmmaker Roy (**Street Trash**) Frumkes, cine-scholar Chris (**Temple of Schlock**) Poggiali, Gary Hertz, and other erstwhile denizens of the Deuce.

**OBIT ORBIT:** The Reaper's furiously swinging scythe showed little signs of slowing since last we convened, claiming a number of showbiz faves. The acting ranks were thinned by the loss of Character King Jon Polito (**VS** #85, 87), who left at a way too young 65 after crafting iconic roles in, among others, the Coen Brothers' **Miller's Crossing** and **Barton Fink**. Also departing were Pittsburgh TV horror host and **Night of the Living Dead** newsman Bill (Chilly Billy) Cardille, 87; actresses Gloria DeHaven, 91, and Lisa (**Castle of Evil**) Gaye, 81; **This Is Not a Test** thesp Seamon Glass, 90; Steven (**Law & Order**) Hill, 94; comic actor Marvin (**It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World**) Kaplan, 89; beloved television Lois Lane Noel Neill, 95; longtime **Legend of Wyatt Earp** and **The Fiend Who Walked the West** star Hugh O'Brian, 91; spaghetti western stalwart Bud (**They Call Me Trinity**) Spencer (aka Carlo Pedersoli), 86; comedy genius Gene (**Young Frankenstein**) Wilder, 83; and only recently added **Star Trek** regular Anton Yelchin, 27. Also among the missing are directors Michael (**The Deer Hunter**) Cimino, 77; Robin (**The Wicker Man**) Hardy,

8 **VideoScope**



86; Arthur (**The In-Laws**) Hiller, 92; Garry (**The Flamingo Kid**) Marshall, 81; and Leslie H. (**Batman: The Movie**) Martinson, 101. The music world lost sound— and ground-breaking guitarist and longtime Elvis sideman Scotty Moore, 84, and wild and crazy Suicide frontman Alan Vega, 78. Two comic giants also moved on—iconic **Mad** magazine and movie poster artist Jack Davis, 91, and musician/comedy writer/Jerry Lewis collaborator Bill (**The Errand Boy**) Richmond, 94, who shared his showbiz thoughts in **VS** #87. Luckily for us, their readily accessible legacies live on.

**DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS:** In our review of Frank Henenlotter's **That's Sexploitation!**, Something Weird Video's Lisa Petrucci was misidentified as *Linda Petrucci* (that's her *sister*, so get it right!). The Ro-Man rating for **Black Mama, White Mama** went mysteriously missing; critic Rob Freese awarded the Pam Grier film ☸☸.

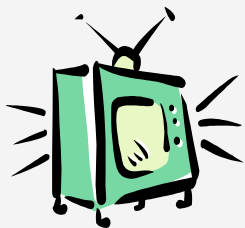
Meantime, hope you enjoy our 100th. To cite Ann-Margret's Jody in **Kitten with a Whip**: "How we made it this far, we'll never know." On the other hand, to quote Peter Weller's **Buckaroo Banzai**: "Wherever you go, there you are." The takeaway? In the meantime, till next time, don't forget to...

*Keep watching the screens!*

## Nancy Naglin's From the Business Desk...

Twelve years ago, the odometer rolled over to our 50th issue. At that time, we pledged to keep improving, bringing more color, more reviews, more features—all told in *The Phantom* and phellow '**Scope** scribes' inimitable, untamed way. In the blink of an eye, we're celebrating the 100th issue of **VideoScope**. In the intervening years, print has become an increasingly challenging environment. Thanks go to our loyal advertising partners, home entertainment distributors, and PR people for their ongoing support. As always, we thank our exceptional and diverse group of writers, who bring unflagging enthusiasm, joy and knowledge to the discovery and analysis of all things film. Subscription in this new publishing landscape is more important than ever. Thanks again go to our flagship subscribers who've been on board since **VS** #1. And for new subscribers just discovering **VideoScope**: We bid you welcome! Please consider subscribing today! Since our 50th Survival Issue, printing has progressed to digital processes. A special tip of *The Phantom* hood goes to our indefatigable art director Kevin Hein. As the entire print industry realigned to digital demands, Kevin coined the immortal phrase: Since when did printing become a NASA experiment in the backyard? Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night has stopped Kevin from delivering **VideoScope** to press on time every time and now, as promised, with expanded color. The Printed Word faces viral competition and, while we encourage discussion in any format, we pledge—looking ahead to the future—to continue to celebrate the world of genre cinema with the **VideoScope** brand of entertaining erudition. The 100th issue of **VideoScope**, a goal once so far and now achieved, invites us to catch our breath for a moment and savor the historical roll call. Hope you'll continue to find **VideoScope** good company. Ro-Man holed up in his cave on a rainy day knows the feeling. ☸





# The Phantom of the Movies'

## NEW RELEASE SHELF

*New release titles are followed by year, Phantom rating, director, lead actors, running time (with titles released in separate editions, the running time refers to the Unrated version), DVD and/or Blu-ray label and release date (month and year).*

### RATINGS KEY

⌘⌘⌘⌘  
Couldn't be better

⌘⌘⌘1/2  
Excellent

⌘⌘⌘  
Good

⌘⌘1/2

Not bad; worth watching

⌘⌘

Mediocre, worthwhile for a particular thesp, director or genre

⌘1/2

Poor but may have points of interest

⌘

Just plain bad

1/2⌘

Even worse than that

⌘⌘

The pits

N/A

Not available on video

N.I.D.

Not in distribution

Special thanks go to Guidance Ro-Man for his ratings symbol suggestion.



### BORN TO BE BLUE (2106)⌘⌘⌘1/2

D: Robert Budreau. Ethan Hawke, Carmen Ejogo, Callum Keith Rennie, Stephen McHattie, Tony Nappo, Janet-Laine Green. 97 mins. (MPI Media/IFC Films) 7/16

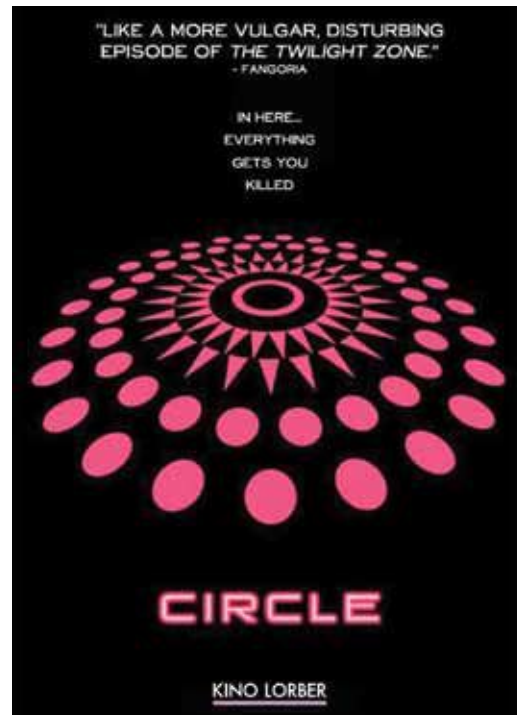
Hawke, late of **Good Kill**, **Boyhood** and **The Purge**, continues to stretch as magic but tragic Beat jazzman Chet Baker, sort of a Jack Kerouac with a trumpet and smoky tenor pipes, who shook up the music scene in the early '50s as a West Coast white boy talented and soulful enough to wow the likes of such jazz giants as a supportive Dizzy Gillespie (Kevin Hanchard) and a suspicious, even hostile Miles Davis (Kedar Brown). Budreau's mostly Canadian production shifts between two time frames—1954, when up-and-comer Chet starts making his musical bones at stellar venues like NYC's Birdland, hooks up with squeeze Elaine (Ejogo), and gets hooked on heroin,

and 1966, when Baker is beaten by pushers so severely that he has to wear dentures, have his mouth surgically repaired and, encouraged by his new love Jane (also played by Ejogo), struggle to relearn his beloved horn. Adding a meta twist are rehearsal scenes from an actual planned fiction movie about Baker that never reached fruition. (In a bit of a Six Degrees of Chet Baker trivia, the jazzman would portray essentially himself ["Chet the American"] in an early Lucio Fulci film, a 1960 pop musical romp or "musicarello" entitled **Howlers of the Dock**.) Much of the movie centers on Chet's lengthy, painful rehab and eventual comeback, his losing battle with heroin (seems he rarely put up much of a fight), and volatile relationships not only with Jane but onetime mentor Dick Bock (Rennie) and nagging parole officer Reid (Nappo). A somewhat ill-advised visit home rekindles friction with his disapproving musician dad (McHattie). While **Blue** doesn't entirely succeed in getting under the skin of its enigmatic subject, it does provide a gripping, dramatized companion piece to Bruce Webber's acclaimed 1988 Baker documentary **Let's Get Lost** (Docurama). Musician David Braid provides the offscreen trumpet chops, but Hawke impresses with his convincing approximation of Chet's simultaneously sad, seductive and otherworldly vocal style. Extras on IFC's DVD include deleted scenes, trailer, and a brief but interesting behind-the-scenes featurette that's worth scoping out.

### CIRCLE (2014)⌘⌘⌘

D: Mario Miscione & Aaron Hann. Carter Jenkins, Lawrence Kao, Allegra Masters, Michael Nardelli, Julie Benz. 86 mins. (Kino Lorber) 7/16

An oft-ingenuous variation on Vincenzo Natali's **Cube** series (**VS** #30, 47, 55), this exercise in geometric cinema—basically a filmed play—sees 50 strangers stranded in a psychodelically lit circular chamber in what's presumably an extraterrestrial vehicle. Involuntary contestants in a sort of alien game show, the Earthlings, who cover the entire ethnic, economic, age, gender and religious spectrum, would seem to represent the contempo American electorate. Frozen in place, the participants realize that when beams of light surround two of their number, they're required to vote on



one's survival. As their ranks inevitably diminish, the increasingly rancorous captives argue about cultural, political and moral issues, while debating who among them is worthy of continued life. Despite a few dips into repetition, co-auteurs Miscione and Hann manage to keep their motor-mouthed enterprise suspenseful and engaging throughout—even sans a shred of action save for the contestants being lethally zapped one by one—thanks largely to a clever script and sharp ensemble acting. In a bonus featurette, Miscione and Hann, along with cinematographer Zoran Popovic, discuss the project's genesis and freely compare it to previous works, most notably **12 Angry Men** (its core inspiration) and **The Twilight Zone**, while citing **Dr. Strangelove's** War Room as a major influence on the set design (**Cube**, interestingly, is *not* mentioned). While not in the same league as either **12 Angry Men** or **Dr. Strangelove**, supreme masterworks by Sidneys Lumet and Kubrick, respectively, **Circle** at least achieves the heights reached by another undeservedly obscure indie, Stig Svendsen's 2011 **Elevator** (**VS** #84). Adventurous viewers in the mood for something different in an era of cookie-cutter product are definitely advised to take a look. Additional extras include a filmmakers' commentary and trailers.

—The Phantom



## VIDEO VERITE

### ELSTREE 1976 (2015) ♂♂♂

D: Jon Spira. Dave Prowse, Paul Blake, Laurie Goode, Jeremy Bulloch, John Chapman. 90 mins. (Film Rise) 6/16

A different kind of **Star Wars** documentary here. The focus is on the bit players, the extras, and the actors in the suits. The most prominent are Dave Prowse (Darth Vader) and Jeremy Bulloch (Boba Fett). The film is structured into three parts, beginning with the early lives of the subjects and how they got into acting, moving on to their experience appearing in **Star Wars** and its sequels, and then catching up on their lives afterwards, with particular emphasis on the convention circuit. There is a lot of fascinating stuff here, such as the discussions about the hierarchies and tensions that have arisen between the actors with face time, those whose features were obscured by masks, and those who were just a face in a crowded shot. Also striking: some footage where we hear Vader's lines delivered by Prowse. In fact, there is a bit of a lost opportunity with Prowse. While we hear about his work on **A Clockwork Orange**, no mention is made of his Hammer years, and this is an actor who played two different Frankenstein Monsters. So though what we hear from Prowse is terrific, a bit more would have been nice. Even so, the ensemble of stories is generally compelling, and the fact that even an extra can become someone whose autograph is sought out by convention attendees is an eye-opening testimony to the extent of the cultural phenomenon of **Star Wars**. A very enjoyable documentary, then, with very engaging subjects, providing a fascinating look into a relatively unexplored aspect of the film industry in general and of **Star Wars** in particular.

—David Annandale

### JUST DESSERTS: THE MAKING OF "CREEPSHOW" (2007) ♂♂♂1/2

D: Michael Felsher. 90 mins. (Synapse Films) 7/16

A thorough and thoroughly entertaining account that can take its place beside **The Definitive Document of the Dead** (also from Synapse Films), Roy Frumkes' exhaustive inquiry into the genesis of George Romero's **Dawn of the Dead** (with detours into other aspects of the auteur's oeuvre), Michael Felsher's **Just Desserts** tells us everything we ever wanted to know about the making of Romero's Stephen King collaboration **Creepshow**. Brought together by their shared love of EC Comics' infamous gory graphic tales,

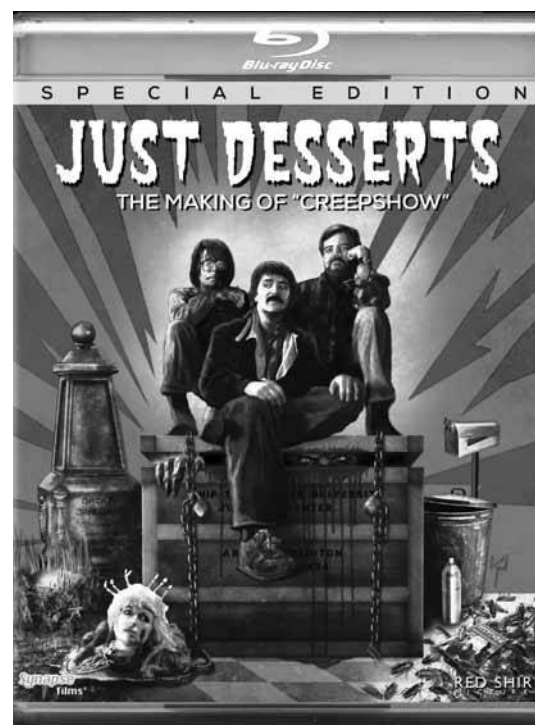
the filmmaker and author pooled their talents to conjure **Creepshow**, a lively 1982 anthology collecting a quintet of comic, sardonic stories framed by a 1950s-set wraparound. The film features an impressive mix of veteran thespians (E.G. Marshall, Hal Holbrook) and then-relative newcomers (Ted Danson, Adrienne Barbeau), along with **Dawn of the Dead** survivor Gaylen Ross and King himself, cast as a doomed yokel in the **The Lonesome Death of Jordy Verrill** episode. Felsher yields fascinating first-hand testimony from the always affable and insightful Romero, effects ace Tom Savini, actors Tom Atkins and Adrienne Barbeau, and dozens more. Synapse's Blu-ray contains a wealth of special features, including a Felsher commentary, a second track with actor John Amplas, property master Bruce Alan Miller, and makeup effects assistant Darryl Ferrucci, an interview with director of photography (and future **Creepshow 2** helmer) Michael Gornick, extended interview segments with Romero, Savini and artist Berni Wrightson (responsible for the inventive connective EC-style comic book panels), the documentaries **Behind the Screams**, **Horror's Hallowed Grounds**, and **Scream Greats Volume One: Tom Savini, Master of Horror Effects**, along with a 1982 *Evening Magazine* set visit, and more. Essential viewing for Romero, King and EC fans.

—The Phantom

### RAY HARRYHAUSEN: SPECIAL EFFECTS TITAN (2011) ♂♂♂♂

D: Gilles Penso. 97 mins. (Arrow Video) 6/16

This loving tribute to the work of stop-motion effects master/filmmaker Ray Harryhausen was filmed over five years with Ray's full participation. After we learn how he got started in motion pictures, being influenced by Willis O'Brien's wizardry in the original **King Kong** and then working with the legendary effects man, each of Harryhausen's films is presented in detail, giving Ray ample opportunity to talk about how the project came to be, the rigors of filming the effects, the tricks of the trade and to reflect fondly on each production. Filmmaker Penso had full access to the Harryhausen museum of props and monsters, which adds an extra layer of "OMG!" for fans of Ray's incredible work. The list of talking heads who praise Ray comprises a veritable who's who of fantasy filmmaking and includes such luminaries as Peter Jackson, John Landis, Steven Spielberg, Tim Burton, Guillermo del Toro and James Cameron, among many, many more. Colleague Ray Bradbury is also on hand to reminisce about how the two dinosaur fans met and formed a lifelong friendship. Actresses Martine Beswick and Caroline Munro recall their time acting opposite Harryhausen-created creatures in **One Million Years B.C.** and **The Golden Voyage of Sinbad**, respectively.



The documentary plays to our love of these films, filling viewers' hearts with wonder, just like we felt the first time we experienced each of Ray's exceptional films. Keeping the focus on Harryhausen himself, telling the tale of his fantastic life first-hand, adds to our enjoyment as we take this journey in his own words. It's sad, too, in that Harryhausen has since passed, along with his brand of superior stop-motion magic. (Cameron says he feels that if Ray was still working, he would be embracing Computer Generated Effects, but in his own words Ray dismisses CGI and says he'd still be doing it the old-fashioned way.) The doc is loaded to the gills with special features, including interview outtakes, additional interviews with the likes of Rick Baker, Edgar Wright, Simon Pegg and Peter Lord, multiple Q&A footage from different festivals, commentary by Penso, a Harryhausen trailer reel and much more. A pure delight from start to finish.

—Rob Freese

### BEHIND THE SCREENS

Elsewhere on the showbiz verite front, Kino Lorber contributes the two-disc set **Comix: Beyond the Comic Book Pages**, featuring Stan Lee & Frank Miller, and Virgil Films goes the **Back to the Future** restoration route with **Outtime: Saving the DeLorean**.

Two veteran John Waters thespians receive separate feature-length studies: once and future "King of Baltimore B Movies" George (Desperate Living) Stover in **No Stopping the Stover** (Alpha Video) and formerly closeted '50s heartthrob Tab (Polyester) Hunter in Jeffrey Schwarz's excellent **Tab Hunter Confidential** (Film Rise), featuring interviews with Darryl Hickman, Robert Wagner, Clint Eastwood, John Waters, and Tab himself.

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## KEANU (2016) ♂♂♂

D: Peter Atencio. Jordan Peele, Keegan-Michael Key, Method Man, Luis Guzman, Nia Long, Will Forte, Tiffany Haddish, Anna Faris. 100 mins. (Warner Home Video) 8/16

Like most sharp TV comedy teams making their debut transition to the big screen, Key and Peele leave much of their more idiosyncratic cerebral magic behind in their home medium. Still, **Keanu** succeeds far better than most of the endless **SNL** spin-offs and cast showcases (with the probable exception of the enduringly witty **Coneheads**) that continue to pollute 'plexes with alarming regularity. Paring down to their comic essences, Key and Peele play their most basic characters, family man Clarence (Key) and bachelor cousin Rell (Peele), a hip post-modern Abbott and Costello anxiously romping through an unsettled DMZ between white and black cultural identities. **Keanu** also doubles as a more hit-than-miss action comedy spoof, with a depressed Rell's beloved titular kitten supplying the requisite McGuffin to spin the plot in motion. When Keanu's catnapped by thug kingpin Cheddar (Method Man), our protags are forced to pose as hardcore gangstas in order to infiltrate his world. The physical and verbal bits fly faster than the speeding bullets that also punctuate the pic when the pair find themselves in the crossfire between rival gangs, undercover cops, and a pair of doppelganger killers likewise essayed by K&P. Among the celeb cameos, **Scary Movie** regular Faris scores high marks as herself, portrayed here as a giddy Hollywood dope fiend in a scene reminiscent of the violent buy sequence in **True Romance**, while Guzman and Forte furnish similar amusement as a Latino crime lord and Cauc stoner, respectively. In short, **Keanu** supplies a solid fix for K&P fans. Extras include the featurette **Keanu: My First Movie**, deleted scenes and a gag reel.

—The Phantom

## LISTENING (2014) ♂♂♂1/2

D: Khalil Sullins. Thomas Stroppel, Artie Ahr, Amber Marie Bollinger, Christine Haeberman. 98 mins. (MVD Visual) 7/16

Stumbling through the Cambodian jungle, a young man (Stroppel) arrives at a Buddhist temple, where he seeks the training he needs to correct a terrible mistake. We then flash back to see exactly what that mistake is. While neglecting his wife, child and mounting bills, he and best friend Ahr work in his green-lit garage with equipment "borrowed" from their college, developing a machine that can read thoughts. They are soon joined by Bollinger, whom Ahr pines after, though she has eyes for Stroppel. Over half the film is the story of the creation of the machine and the rising tensions and desperation within the group. Though the idea is interesting, the

tempo drags here, and after the Cambodian opening, we spend most of our time in the garage, which makes the film's limited budget all the more apparent. Once the thought machine is up and running, things spiral out of control and the pace picks up considerably. In fact, some events and discussions go by a bit too quickly, making suspension of disbelief difficult. Perhaps most frustratingly, though there are some really sharp, fascinating discussions about the consequences of the machine, they occur quite late in the game, are very brief, and aren't fully explored. The performances are solid, though Bollinger is saddled with a role that has the camera ogling her for much of the film. Having said this, the ambition of **Listening**, especially given its budget, is admirable. In the last act, when we move beyond the garage, the film makes the most of its settings, and writer/director Sullins does a good job of creating the impression of major events in play. **Listening** is worth a look, then, but its execution isn't quite up to its conception. Extras include a festival Q&A with Sullins and others.

—David Annandale

## THE LOBSTER (2015) ♂♂♂1/2

D: Yorgos Lanthimos. Colin Farrell, Rachel Weisz, John C. Reilly, Lea Seydoux, Angeliki Papoulia, Ben Whishaw. 118 mins. (Lionsgate) 8/16

Cinematic surrealist Lanthimos' English-language debut emerges as an alternately wickedly funny and hauntingly sad satire of discomfiting mating rites and enforced conformity. In an unspecified time and place where being single constitutes a serious crime, unattached offenders are remanded to The Hotel, a combo Club Med and Gitmo, where they're allotted 45 days to secure a partner or be transformed into the animal of their choice. Our protag David (an uncharacteristically passive Farrell, effectively cast against type in a role equally suited to Johnny Depp, and the only character here granted a proper name) opts to become the titular critter if he doesn't make the cut. (His rationale: "Lobsters live to be over 100 years old, have blue blood just like aristocrats, and stay fertile all of their lives.") Accompanied by his brother the dog (who'd flunked an earlier test), David auditions for and is auditioned by disparate and desperate members of the opposite sex. Following a spectacularly failed relationship attempt with the Ilsa-like "Heartless Woman" (Papoulia) that ends in grotesque violence, David and similarly disheartened "Short Sighted Woman" (Weisz) escape into the surrounding woods, where they find dubious shelter among the Loners, a band of fellow fugitives whose arbitrary rules are just as rigid, deranged and Draconian as those of their previous captors. Can the couple find refuge in The City, where TSA types incessantly intimidate and interrogate suspected singles? Auteur Lanthimos takes on large and thorny themes with a fierce and funny urgency and originality, even incorporating a David Lynch-like musical number when creepy resort managers (Gary Moun-



taine, Olivia Colman) perform a scary rendition of "Something's Gotten Hold of My Heart" while their charges dance stiffly before them. In addition to the two leads, Reilly is typically terrific as Limping Man (who's friends with Whishaw's Limping Man). Withal, this contemporary blend of Kafka, Vonnegut and Lanthimos' own unique vision qualifies as must viewing. Extras include the making-of featurette **The Fabric of Attraction: Concocting The Lobster**.

—The Phantom

### **GRUMPY OLD CRITICS** **(Say the Darnedest Things)**

#### **DEPT.** **NINE LIVES**

#### **Me-ow!**

"It's a pet farce so flat it makes you long for the Lubitsch touch of the **Alvin and the Chipmunks** comedies."

Owen Gleiberman, *Variety*

"This witless talking cat movie needs to go out with the kitty litter."

Peter Travers, *Rolling Stone*

"Don't waste the one life you have on **Nine Lives**."

Linda Cook, *Quad City Times*

"The cast member you really feel bad for is the cat."

Neil Genzlinger, *The New York Times*

"Requiescat in puss."

Steve Davis, *The Austin Chronicle*



## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR

(2016) ♂♂♂

D: Johannes Roberts. Sarah Wayne Callies, Jeremy Sisto, Suchitra Pillai-Malik, Sofia Rosinsky, Logan Creran. 95 mins. (20th Century Fox) 6/16

Occasionally creepy but also flawed, **The Other Side of the Door** is nonetheless a welcome relief from Tinseltown's many overblown blockbusters. Shot on a low budget with a small cast, **Door** is a well-acted character study of a bereaved mom (Callies of **The Walking Dead**) who goes to extreme lengths in order to be reunited with her dead son. It's a mistake she comes to regret. This Indian/British co-production (with American stars) is set in Mumbai and appears to have been lensed on location, though no information is provided on the film's digital release which verifies this. The DVD features the trailer and a two-minute interview with producer Alexandre Aja, who describes the film's plot but offers no insight into the production. For reasons unknown, these brief extras are not included on the Blu-ray. Callies and Sisto play Maria and Michael, an American couple living in India, mourning the death of their son in a drowning accident. Housekeeper Piki (Pillai-Malik) tells Maria of a thousand-year-old temple deep in the countryside where she can literally talk to her son if she follows a pre-ordained ritual. Maria won't be able to see her son; they can only chat through a large, ancient door: Maria is warned not to open that door. Maria opens it, unleashing her son's angry spirit upon the world and a few other supernatural forces along with him. Callies is marvelous in a difficult role which requires a range of emotions; the actress is clearly up to the challenge as she segues from happy family woman to clinically depressed mom. She shows a fierce determination to make contact with the boy but is later filled with horror and regret when she realizes what she has done. The scenes in the old temple are wonderfully eerie but unfortunately far too brief. The suspense and terror build as Maria foolishly opens the door and steps inside. Seconds later, she's on a train heading home. So what happened in there and how did she get out? These questions are never answered by the filmmakers. Sisto, a familiar face from TV and film, isn't much more than window dressing in **Door**, given little to do until the film's climactic battle between the living and the dead. Pillai-Malik, primarily a Bollywood actress, gives a strong, subtle performance as the film's other bereaved mom: Piki is a simple if wise religious woman who accepts what is—she eventually pays a terrible price for her employer's foolish mistake. **Door** has some wonderful moments, as well as several glaring holes in the script. It's worth a look.

—David-Elijah Nahmod

## PRECIOUS CARGO (2015) ♂

D: Max Adams. Mark-Paul Gosselaar, Bruce Willis, Claire Forlani, John Brotherton, Lydia Hull, Daniel Bernhardt. 90 mins. (Lionsgate) 6/16

Sad times for Bruce W: After headlining in helmer Adams' atrocious **Extraction** (Lionsgate), the iconic **Die Hard** hero signs up for more degradation in this pathetic attempt at a simultaneously violent and breezy caper flick, one that made us long for the days of Andy (Guns) Sedaris. In Bruce's defense, he ducks as much direct participation as any second-billed thesp in recent memory, literally cell-phoning in most of his scant screentime, seemingly from another movie, before finally surfacing in the flesh for a final face-to-face confrontation with his foes. (As a sort of white wannabe Marsellus Wallace, crime boss Bruce actually utters a signature line from **Pulp Fiction**.) The script in general suffers from serious Diablo (Juno) Cody Syndrome, wherein all the characters talk alike via virtually undifferentiated dialogue. Making matters worse is the fact that, aside from passable perfs by vets Gosselaar and Forlani as a couple of high-tech crooks who steal from Bruce's stash, and Bernhardt as the latter's no-nonsense lieutenant, scribes Adams and Paul V. Seetachitt's tone-deaf exchanges are delivered by a painfully inept lineup of secondary thespes. The pic's climactic set-piece, an elaborate armored car robbery, is at once convoluted and uninvolved. The entire woeful enterprise is a bit surprising since essentially the same team pulled off a decent action thriller with the generically titled **Heist** (VS #98), with Robert De Niro (himself no stranger to slumming) in Bruce's mob czar role. Extras include a featurette, cast & crew interviews, and a trailer gallery. Bruce, meanwhile, makes his next B-flick foray in Steven C. Miller's **Marauders**.

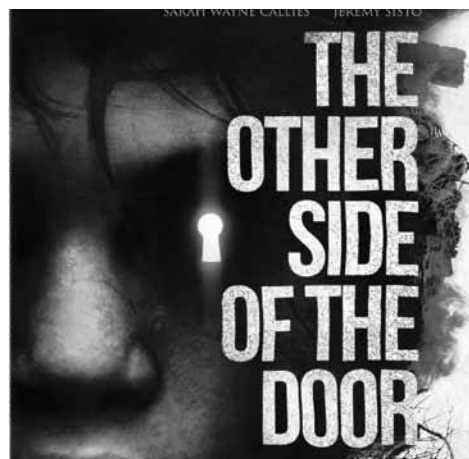
—The Phantom

## RUSHLIGHTS: NEW UNRATED

DIRECTOR'S CUT (2013) ♂♂♂

D: Antoni Stutz. Beau Bridges, Haley Webb, John Henderson, Aidan Quinn, Jordan Bridges, Lorna Raver, Joel McKinnon Miller. 96 mins. (Vertical Entertainment, Amazon streaming)

Bonnie and Clyde. Billy Joe and Bobby Sue. Billy and Sarah. It is wonderful when couples share common interests: bank robbery, burglary and estate fraud. Unfortunately, when you pull this stuff in Texas, you run into Steve Miller's "great big hassle." Since neither Los Angeles ex-con Billy (Henderson) nor local ex-crackhead waitress Sarah (Webb) seem to be familiar with **Bonnie and Clyde** or "Take the Money and Run," they have to learn that it is dangerous to impersonate a wealthy rancher's OD'd heiress/niece. Director Stutz and co-writer Ashley Scott Meyers construct and deconstruct what appears to be an L.A. grifters versus Texas rubes tale set in the fictional town/county of Tremo, with its cafe, law offices, sheriff's station and a different kind of haunted estate. Webb and Henderson are



attractive and competent, but the focus is on their better-known peers. As county sheriff Brogden, Beau Bridges seems to discern his character's limitations but won't let you know that. Quinn, an '80s Celtic stud, plays Brogden's lawyer brother as a man who leads a life of unquiet desperation. Jordan Bridges, of **Rizzoli & Isles** fame, is the himbo deputy who aims to "protect and serve" the local (two-legged) cougar. Miller's storekeeper, Sal Marinaro, is edgier than Scully, the oafish cop he plays on **Brooklyn 9-9**. This film-fest feature may wind up in your DVD collection this year and in some cable channel's lineup the next.

—Ronald Charles Epstein

## 600 MILES (2015) ♂♂♂

D: Gabriel Ripstein. Tim Roth, Kristyan Ferrer, Harrison Thomas, Noe Fernandez. 84 mins. (Lionsgate) 7/16

Instead of tackling the Mexican drug cartel wars in a large-scale way, like Steven Soderbergh's higher-profile **Traffic** (VS #38) and Denis Villeneuve's **Sicario** (Lionsgate), director/co-writer Gabriel (Son of fellow auteur Arturo) Ripstein goes the micro route, centering his story on Arnulfo Rubio (Ferrer), an untested youth who's running guns from Arizona to Mexico, and Hank Harris (Roth), a grizzled ATF agent who, following a bungled surveillance mission, becomes Arnulfo's captive. As Arnulfo continues his titular drive through rural Mexico, Harris uses his wiles to win the impressionable perp to his side, a campaign that leads Arnulfo into ever more dangerous terrain. Both Ferrer and Tarantino regular Roth prove up to the challenge of sustaining audience interest in Ripstein's brief but digressive and leisurely paced road movie, even during some of its more static stretches. Ripstein also succeeds in painting a depressingly convincing picture of crime at its lowest end, touring a world of trashy gun shops north of the border and seedy cantinas south. For Arnulfo, the interlude reps a life-or-death watershed; for Harris, just another amoral day at the office. **600 Miles** would make an ideal companion to **Mercury Plains** (VS #98), Charles Burmeister's similarly low-key look at the same sorry situation.

—The Phantom





## The Phantom's NOIR GANG!

MILL CREEK ENTERTAINMENT

(2-disc \$9.98) 6/16

ONE FALSE MOVE (1991) 8881/2

D: Carl Franklin. Bill Paxton, Cynda Williams, Billy Bob Thornton, Michael Beach, Jim Metzler, Earl Billings. 105 mins.

Part of Mill Creek's **Deadly Suspects: 5 Movie Collection**, **One False Move** springs from a complex, organic script (by soon-ascendant actor Thornton and writing partner Tom Epperson) given life by former Roger Corman director Carl (Full Fathom Five) Franklin. After a brutal L.A. drug rip-off leaves six people dead, murderous redneck Ray (Thornton), high-IQ black psycho Pluto (Beach), and Ray's passive multi-culti squeeze Fantasia (Williams), following a violent Texas detour, head for Ray and Fantasia's hometown of Star City, Arkansas, where gung-ho young lawman Dale "Hurricane" Dixon (Paxton) eagerly awaits them. Joining Dixon, in a reverse **Beverly Hills Cop** move, are interracial LAPD detectives Metzler and Billings. Franklin crosscuts between the killers' brutal progress and the law enforcers' preparations for their anticipated arrival. Paxton turns in finely tuned, textured work in a role that demands a radical character change roughly halfway through. The supporting players likewise emote sans false notes, with Thornton and Beach convincingly scary, and Williams credibly desperate as their deeply conflicted cohort. **One False Move** also dares to dig beneath the surface to examine subtle racial issues that have yet to be sorted out in this country, along with the players' individual dilemmas. The authentic locations—much of the film was lensed in tiny Cotton Plant, AR—add another exotic dimension. One of the very best creations of the late '80s/early '90s American Indie Boom, an impromptu movement that brought us the Coen Brothers, Steven Soderbergh, and Quentin Tarantino, among many others, **One False Move** has lost none of its power in the interim. The film is eminently deserving of its own Blu-ray special edition with behind-the-scenes bonus material, but until that happens Mill Creek's more than decent widescreen presentation fills the gap. Mill Creek's set includes two top-rate suspenseers, Alan J. Pakula's 1997 IRA-themed **The Devil's Own**, with Harrison Ford and Brad Pitt, and Joseph (The Stepfather) Ruben's 1988 courtroom thriller **True Believer**, with James Woods as a William Kuntzler-like radical lawyer and Robert Downey, Jr. as his eager acolyte. Completing the set are James Foley's 2007 **Perfect Stranger**, with Bruce Willis and Halle Berry, and **Lonely Hearts**, Todd Robinson's 2006

take on the **Lonely Hearts Killers** case, earlier dramatized in Leonard Kastle's brilliant **The Honeymoon Killers** (VS #97) and Arturo Ripstein's **Deep Crimson** (VS #32).

WARNER ARCHIVE

(\$21.95 DVD each) 6/16, 7/16

COUNT THE HOURS (1953) B&W

888

D: Don Siegel. Teresa Wright, MacDonald Carey, Dolores Moran, Jack Elam, Edgar Barrier, Adele Mara. 76 mins.

With a plot that in many of its particulars pre-dates Joseph Ruben's previously cited **True Believer**, ambitious and distracted defense attorney Doug Madison (a rock-steady Carey) reluctantly agrees to take on the case of innocent handyman Braden (Craven), conveniently railroaded into a murder charge after his employers are brutally shot to death during a botched robbery attempt. The accused's pregnant wife Ellen's (Wright) show of courage motivates our protag, against the wishes of his wealthy fiancée Paula (Moran) and smug, possibly corrupt D.A. Jim Gillespie (Barrier). Our story, trim and well-told under noir specialist and Clint Eastwood mentor Siegel's sharp supervision, is further enhanced by the presence of noir cinematographer par excellence John Alton, who imparts the film with moody atmosphere galore, even during daylight scenes set around a lake where a hired diver searches for the submerged murder weapon. (Said diver later attempts to sexually assault Wright and slugs an intervening Carey, with no legal repercussions!). The ever-dependable Elam, at his skunky best as lowlife killer Max Verne, is also on the scene, blowing his dough boozing at a local dive and buying gaudy baubles for his unlikely Daisy Mae-style squeeze (an amusing Mara). While falling short of the top tier, **Count the Hours** arrives as a worthy addition to the noir ranks.

STAKEOUT ON DOPE STREET (1958) B&W

8881/2

D: Irvin Kershner. Yale Wexler, Jonathan Haze, Morris Miller, Abby Dalton, Allen Kramer, Herman Rudin. 83 mins.

Cost-efficient crime capers and noir dramas were often the go-to genre of choice both for 1950s-era TV hands looking to branch out into feature films and novices hoping to break into either the big- or small-screen medium. Prime examples of such ambitious demo reels include Allen Baron's 1961 cult fave **Blast of Silence** (Criterion Collection, VS #1) and Richard T. Heffron's young Steve McQueen 1958 showcase **The Great St. Louis Bank Robbery** (Alpha Video, VS #19), candid outings with edges too rough and raw for Stateside TV. Even thesp Walter Matthau got into the act with his gritty 1960 B flick **Gangster Story** (Alpha Video). One of the best of this too often underrated bunch is the 1958 indie **Stakeout on Dope Street**, produced by future cathode kingpin Andrew J. (The Rebel, Branded)



Fenady and **Confidential File** veteran and future A-film director Irvin (The Empire Strikes Back) Kershner, from a script by Fenady, Kershner, and one-shot wonder Irwin Schwartz. Sort of a skid-row **Scarface** limning a low-glam picture of a working-class L.A. nabe, **Stakeout** dramatizes the desperate dreams and agonizing decisions faced by three struggling youths who stumble upon an abandoned can of high-grade heroin lost in the aftermath of a double homicide that claimed a cop's life. Would-be big-timer Nick (Miller, who more often emoted under the name Steven Marlo) is hot to peddle the smack to the highest bidder, while sensible, straight-shooting aspiring artist Jim (Wexler) wants out, and their passive junior partner Ves (AIP regular Haze, of **Little Shop of Horrors** fame) vacillates between the two. While the entire cast, including Dalton as Jim's sensitive, sexy bowling-alley worker squeeze and Harry Dean Stanton in a memorable if eye-blink cameo, acquit themselves with naturalistic aplomb, the pic belongs to Kramer as Danny, Nick's low-rent "connection," a pathetic if (somewhat overly) articulate junkie who promises to move the stash for the boys, even as the cops close in and a brace of brutal thugs intensify their pursuit. In an extended flashback sequence obviously inspired by Otto Preminger's recent outre hit adaptation of Nelson Algren's **The Man with the Golden Arm**, Kramer gives an illustrated demonstration of the addict lifestyle, complete with hood beatings, police run-ins, and a grueling cold-turkey detox session. Juiced by an excellent cool West Coast score performed by the Hollywood Chamber Jazz Group, **Stakeout on Dope Street** reps a rare unpolished gem that demands noir fans' immediate attention. 8



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## ANIMATION NATION

**BATMAN: THE KILLING JOKE** (2016)

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D: Bruce Timm and Sam Liu. Voice cast: Kevin Conroy, Mark Hamill, Tara Strong, Ray Wise, John DiMaggio, Robin Atkin Downes. 76 mins. (2-disc Warner Home Entertainment) 8/16

Since **Deadpool** made being R-Rated acceptable for superhero movies, Warner Animation releases the first R-Rated adult cartoon, based on the popular graphic novel of the same name. Getting straight to the controversy: yes, Batman (Conroy) and Batgirl (Strong) have sex on a rooftop, because that seems to be Batman's favorite place to play, given that he did the same thing with Catwoman a few comics back. For quite a while now, both in **Batman Beyond** (VS #33) and **Batman: Mystery of the Batwoman** (VS #49), it's been hinted at that Barbara and Bruce were once a thing or that Barb wanted it to be a thing and settled for Robin. What bothers me is how it's animated. Isn't Batgirl's costume supposed to be a one-piece leotard-like bodysuit? Suddenly she can slip off the top and reveal a bra. So now her costume consists of yoga pants and a tight long-sleeve top? It's all just a way to get her naked faster. And frankly, the scene didn't warrant an R-Rating at all. Basically, we have two stories here: one from Batgirl's perspective and one that makes her getting shot and crippled later more poignant and seems to motivate Batman to go after the Joker with a vengeance after visiting Barb in the hospital. Is it the way I envisioned **The Killing Joke** as I read the comic? Sort of. Conroy and Hamill work well together and it's nice to see them paired for one last go-round as The Caped Crusader and The Clown Prince of Crime. I found it odd that they left out the sound effect of the approaching police sirens as seen in the final panels of the comic. There's also a mid end credit scene (because now that's a comic-book movie thing) where Barbara gets back to business as Oracle. But the comic is still in print and, really, can a feature film do better than your own imagination? The actual killing joke told by the Joker was way funnier the way I read it in my head. So, I deduct one Ro-Man for a poorly told joke and Batgirl's weirdly two-piece cat-suit. Regardless, you definitely won't have "one bad day" watching this film.

—Dwight Kemper

**THE FANTASTIC PLANET** (1973)

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D: Rene Laloux. 84 mins. (Criterion Collection) 6/16



Laloux's animated adventure, co-scripted by fellow illustrator Roland Topor from the Stefan Wul novel **Oms et Serie**, chronicles the conflicts that arise between the "Traags," a dominant race of physical and intellectual alien giants, and the diminutive, oppressed, human-like "Oms." In Laloux's futuristic world, tame "Oms" are adopted as pets for Traag children, while their "wild" counterparts are cruelly hunted and killed. When a juvenile Om dubbed "Terr" escapes from his Traag masters, the act sets in motion a series of incidents that ultimately turns the tide in the tiny Oms' favor. Laloux's charming, satiric, and profoundly eerie antiwar parable unfolds against a colorful, richly rendered alienoid landscape, while his core moral message remains as eternal as it is universal. **The Fantastic Planet's** restored, subtitled edition enjoyed a select 1999 theatrical release and now, some 17 years later, looks even better in Criterion's Blu-ray edition. In addition to a fresh 2K digital restoration, the release includes an alternate English-language soundtrack, two early short films by Laloux and illustrator Roland Topor, a 2009 documentary on Laloux, an archival Topor interview and a 1974 French TV episode about his work, and an essay by critic Michael Brooke. ୪

—The Phantom

### Animation Extra

Elsewhere in the animation arena, Cinelicious Pics puts out the lost 1973 Japanimation masterpiece **Belladonna of Sadness**, produced by anime legend Osamu Tezuka and directed by Eiichi (Astro Boy) Yamamoto. The creators take a psychedelic/heavy metal approach to their rendering of this supernatural tale of medieval rape and revenge. Blu-ray bonus material includes new interviews with Yamamoto, art director Kuni Fukai and composer Masahiko Satoh, along with theatrical trailers and a 16-page booklet featuring a new essay by Dennis Bartok.

## THE TRUTH FROM THE BOOTH Confessions of a Film Projectionist By Tim Ferrante

Last issue's article chronicled but a fraction of those years when I blithely toiled as a film projectionist. In the mid-'70s I was peripatetic, learning as many of the booths that were a part of our union's jurisdiction as I could. The more you knew, the more valuable you were when someone needed a night off, moved or retired. I loved when I'd get a call out of the blue that asked if I could work at this theatre or that. Such was the case of an emergency situation with the Music Makers theatre circuit. The company had recently bought a small chain of three or four screens out in western New Jersey. It wasn't in my jurisdiction, but the company itself asked if I'd go as opposed to the union business agent. I was very, very new to the game and unsure, but someone was in a panic from the Cinnaminson Twin Cinemas where a near sold-out showing of **Superbug**, one of the German-produced film series designed to capitalize on Disney's **Herbie The Love Bug**, was booked as a kiddie matinee. The projectionist couldn't make it on time and there was no one there who could start the show.

As green as I was, I agreed to go. I'd never run a frame in that booth...didn't know where anything was and was flying blind. Showtime came and *ta-da!* Picture, but no sound. The movie is running, kids are excited, and I'm fumbling and stumbling like Barney Fife. I called the main office and they had another projectionist call me right back. "What's the name of the amplifier on the wall?" I told him and then he said, "See all of those buttons running down the front of it? Just start at the top and keep pressing them one by one!" *Click. Click. Click.* BOOM! The audio thundered into the auditorium. I'd cranked the volume knob to max during my bumbling and forgot to normalize it. You want sound? I'll give ya sound! The upshot is that patrons watched the first seven or eight minutes of **Superbug** without sound, but the show went on from there without a hitch. I learned that if I was ever asked to do something like that again, I should be candid and forewarn everyone of the risk involved. Either that, or just say no! ୪

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# Phantom Pheedback



## WHO'S TO ARGUE?

Dear Phantom,  
I agree with your reviewer, **Crimson Peak** was a misfire. Del Toro failed on all accounts. But, the way I see it, you can't win them all; del Toro will make brilliant horror once again! When I heard about **In the Heart of the Sea**, I was not too enthusiastic about it. I said to myself..."another **Moby Dick** story." Then I watched it and couldn't get enough of this movie. I found **Pride, Prejudice and Zombies** to be a very boring movie. Daniel Radcliffe and James McAvoy did a wonderful job with **Victor Frankenstein**. That was a fun horror movie. I loved **The Revenant**, but did not enjoy **The Hateful Eight**. Tarantino did a horrendous job with it. All of the unnecessary shouting in the movie gave me a headache. Enjoyed your feature: **Tele-Video: Who Goes There?** by Dan Cziraky. I am a big **Dr. Who** fan.  
—Paul Dale Roberts, via e-mail

*Guillermo del Toro, who recently created a museum exhibit titled **At Home with Monsters**, plans to tackle the big screen next with **The Shape of Water**, a Cold War-set fantasy featuring the great Michael Shannon and Guillermo go-to guy Doug Jones.*

## TV TROUBLES

Greetings Phantom,  
I recently tuned in to the colorized version of **Earth vs. the Flying Saucers**. It must've been an early restoration, colorization job. I was watching it on a high-def TV with all the bells and whistles. Despite that, the picture wasn't clear and the color was cheesy—I was unable to make the picture clear nor could I adjust the color properly. My main concern was the movement of the characters. At times the picture would momentarily freeze and jump to several frames ahead. After the movie, an old episode of **The Saint** came on, but it too had the same jerking mechanical movement. Maybe you can explain what the problem is?  
—Russ Bell, Stoney Creek, ON, Canada

*Ro-Man commands you adjust your antenna!*

## OUT IN A FLASH

Phantom,  
Was just watching this old classic:  
Flash and Princess Aura (Ming's daughter) get dropped into "The Pit"—  
Aura: "Ooooh the Dragon of Death, we must escape!"  
Flash: "How?"  
Aura: "Through the door!"  
—J.D. Conkerroo, via e-mail

*Thanks for sending that deathless exchange! If you're in the market for more nuggets, scope out Olive Films' new **Commando Cody: Sky Marshal of the Universe** release.*

## WHAT YOU SEAGAL'S WHAT YOU GET

Dear Phantom,  
Been a longtime subscriber and absolutely love each issue. Just a bit of trivia regarding **The Challenge**, reviewed in Issue #99; buried deep in the credits as "Martial Arts Coordinator" is Steve [sic] Seagal. Maybe his first screen credit? Anyway, keep up the great work. Looking forward to Issue #100!!!

—Dave Alianiello, Reynoldsburg, OH

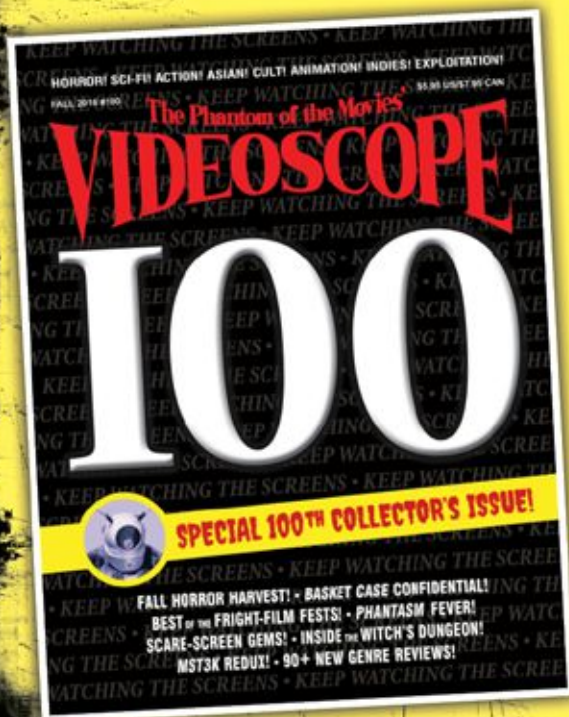
*According to the IMDb, **The Challenge** was indeed Mr. Seagal's first credit, back when he was plain ol' Steve. As for #100: It's here already! Score your once-in-a-lifetime 'Scope commemorative keepsake. See details below!*

*Send your comments and queries to:*

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## They Came From The Basement!

By John Seal

### BURY ME AN ANGEL (1972) ♂♂♂

D: Barbara Peeters. Dixie Peabody, Clyde Ventura, Terry Mace, Dan Haggerty, Stephen Wittaker, David Atkins. 89 mins.

With a title like **Bury Me an Angel**, you might anticipate a biker epic filled with roaring hogs, well-seasoned leathers, and sociopathic if vaguely lovable characters disdainful of authority and favorably inclined towards substance abuse and gang rape. If those are your expectations, you'll probably consider the actual film a disappointing example of false advertising.

Writer-director Barbara Peeters, however, clearly had a different agenda. Bringing a feminist perspective to this famously musky and testosterone-laden genre, Peeters' film relies a lot less on the favored clichés of your typical AIP or Crown International biker flick, instead telling a story of one woman's quest for revenge against the man who murdered her brother.

**Bury Me an Angel's** heroine is Dag Bandy (Peabody), a tall, massively coiffed woman whose clean-cut brother Danny is shot-gunned to death in the film's first five minutes by a droopy-mustached loser (Wittaker, who resembles Bay Area television legend "Paul from the Diamond Center") for stealing his motorcycle. Peeters spends much time gruesomely lingering on Danny's bloodied head (returning to it frequently via flashback) but displays a more artful eye when examining Dag and Danny's childhood relationship. Shot through a vaseline-smear lens, this gauzy backstory allows her to show off her skills with the camera, though an extended shot of a tear trickling down Dag's cheek outlasts its welcome.

Determined to track down the bad guy before he can escape to Canada (why this famously unguarded border would have prevented her from pursuing him further is left unexplained), Dag buys a gun, gathers supplies, and hits the road with Bernie (Ventura) and Jonsie (Mace), a pair of comic relief characters who spend most of their time chauvinistically complaining about Dag's cooking. Henceforth, **Bury Me an Angel** is an episodic road movie, with Dag pursuing her great white whale after consulting a biker named Weasel (played by an uncredited actor who looks like David Lander of *Squiggy* fame), a street preacher (Atkins), and—most critically—artist Ken (Dan Haggerty, a few years before **Grizzly Adams**). In addition to providing the final clue Dag needs to locate her prey, Ken has a one-night stand with our

heroine that reveals a dark secret concerning her relationship with Danny.

Dramatic moments aside, Peeters generally seems more comfortable with the film's visual and comic scenes. There's lots of footage of the threesome tooling through the desert Southwest, Jonsie's tophat never once coming loose despite high speeds and hot winds. A nighttime encounter with a redneck midget sheriff (Corky Williams) provides one of the film's lighter (and stranger) moments ("What the cornbread hell's going on here anyway?" queries the high-pitched little person), as does a skinny-dipping scene—despite some racially insensitive dialogue that will leave most 21<sup>st</sup> century viewers squirming uncomfortably.

For those more interested in counterculture silliness, there's plenty on offer. The film's opening sequence focuses on an extended debauch, with characters ingesting a wide variety of substances whilst couples grope each other with wild abandon. Dag, Jonsie and Bernie later encounter Op (Angel Colbert), a self-proclaimed witch who blows their minds with cannabis stew and groovy musings on the spiritual power of the universe.

While none of **Bury Me an Angel's** cast offers particularly memorable performances, it must be said that the stiff and blank-faced Peabody is an especially poor actress. No doubt hired because of her evident comfort riding a motorcycle, she wisely made only one more screen appearance before retiring from film. Better is old AIP hand Beach Dickerson who, in addition to serving as **Angel's** associate producer, plays the kindly owner of a local diner. Released by Roger Corman's New World Pictures, **Bury Me an Angel** features an ersatz Steppenwolf soundtrack from East-West Pipeline, a group whose music also featured in 1970's **Angels Die Hard**. There's next to no information out there about this group, so presumably they were session musicians. Whoever they were, fans of John Kay's bunch will enjoy their sound.

Also released by New World on VHS, **Bury Me an Angel** has been absent from home-video for over 30 years and has (to the best of my knowledge) never aired on television. While it's no lost classic, motorcycle movie enthusiasts will be eager to add this to their collection, and it's a natural candidate for release by Shout! Factory's salvage crew, who've done a stellar job releasing Corman features on disc. This **Angel** might currently be buried, but it's definitely deserving of disinterment. ♂

### Get'em While They Last!

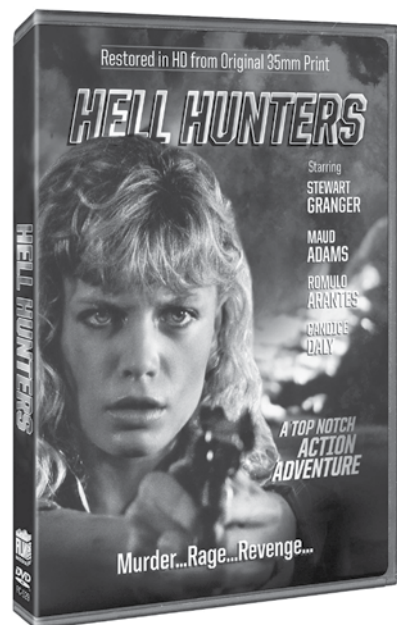
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See page 64 for details.

## The Phantom's CAMP CORNER

### HELL HUNTERS (1986) ♂♂1/2

D: Ernst R. v. Theumer. Maud Adams, Stewart Granger, Candice Daly, George Lazenby, Romulo Arantes, Russ McCubbin, William Berger, Eduardo Conde. 98 mins. (Film Chest) 7/16

A Nearly Farrah Fawcett (Daly), Almost Eric Roberts (Arantes) and Sort of Randall "Tex" Cobb (McCubbin) join forces to invade the heavily if ineptly armed South-American redoubt of fugitive Nazi mad scientist Martin Hoffman (former swashbuckler star Granger) and his henchvillain Heinrich (erstwhile 007 Lazenby) in a haphazard caper recalling Andy (**Fit to Kill**) Sidaris's guns-and-gals adventures and v. Theumer's own **Jungle Warriors** (VS #79), with a touch of De Palma's **Scarface** tossed into the mix. The pic opens with a fairly well-executed suspense sequence as ponytailed, unbrowed hitman El Pasado (Conde) stalks Nazi hunter Amanda (slumming former Bond Girl Adams, of **The Man with the Golden Gun** and **Octopussy** fame) through an airport, highlighted by a violent ladies' room stop. **Hell Hunters** grows increasingly sloppy when Amanda's distant daughter Ally (Daly) and single-minded Nazi hunter cohort Tonio (Arantes) continue the cause and go gunning for Hoffman in a choppy edited emprise that entails lots of figurative and literal lateral movement, including a long aquatic love-making set-piece between protags Daly and Arantes (a real-life swim champ), sexually healing a relationship that had theretofore relied on much **Romance of the Stone**-style hostility. While **Hell Hunters**, which hinges on our heroes foiling Hoffman's plot to toxify L.A.'s population by injecting secret super spider venom (!) into Angel City's water supply, fails to hit the heights of a **Jungle Warriors**, it reps a fun enough return to the VHS days of yore to merit a look. ♂

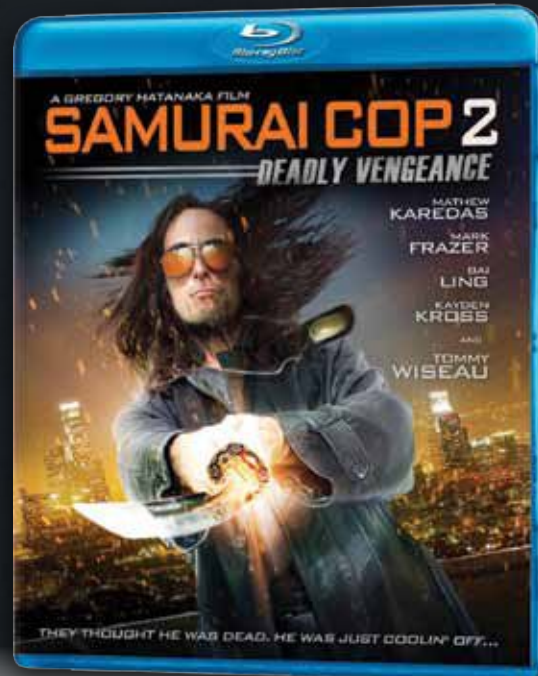
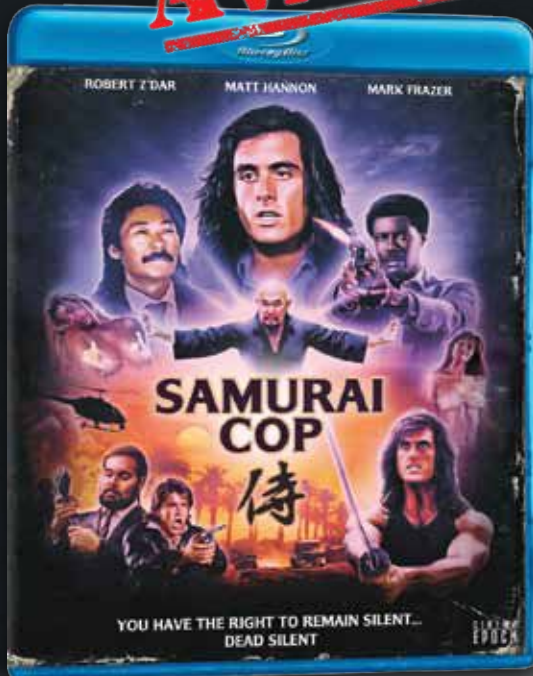


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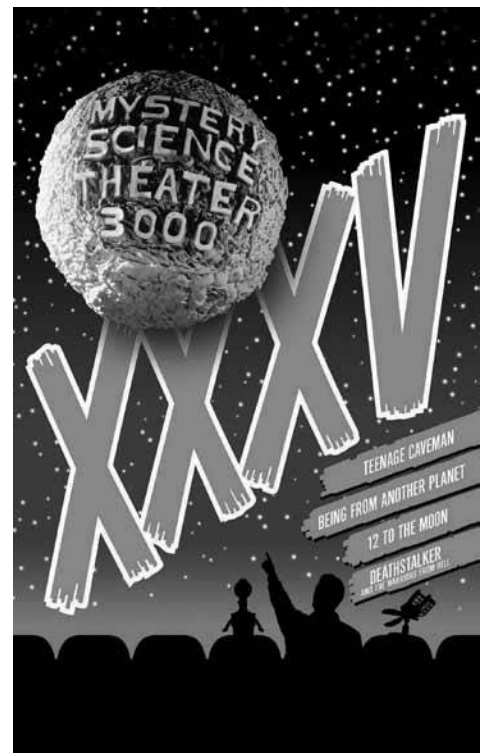
8881/2

D: Various. Joel Hodgson, Trace Beaulieu, Kevin Murphy, Frank Conniff, Michael J. Nelson. 480 mins. (4-disc \$59.97 Shout! Factory) 3/16

With excitement mounting for the sexy new **MST3K** coming to Netflix, let us not forget the classic **MST3K**. Shout! Factory gives us a double play from Uncle Roger Corman, as well as a 1960 lunar chestnut and an '80s mummy dud. Disc 1 is **Teenage Caveman** (1958, Experiment #315), plus the shorts **Aquatic Wizards** and **Catching Trouble**. On the Satellite of Love, Joel (Hodgson), Tom Servo (Murphy), and Crow (Beaulieu) are bored, until Gypsy (Jim Mallon) admits she doesn't know how to play poker. Invention Exchange: Joel and the 'bots have invented new Ipecacs. Dr. Forrester (Beaulieu) and TV's Frank (Conniff) engage in an unexpected knife fight in Deep 13. After watching the shorts, the first on aquatic acrobatics, the second a nature special that quickly devolves into animal abuse, the mads (still fighting) send the feature. A tribe of primitive yet mostly well-groomed and clean-shaven humans lives among the rocks and boulders of frequent Corman location Bronson Canyon. On the other side of the river lies a lush, game-filled land that The Law Giver says is forbidden to the tribe. He tells them a terrible god lives there whose touch brings death. The young son of The Symbol Maker (Robert Vaughn) will soon come of age, but he has the most annoying habit of questioning *everything*. This gets under the animal pelts of The Black-Bearded One (**F-Troop**'s Frank DeKova), a gimpy-legged tribesman who at first eggs on Vaughn but condemns him the minute he breaks the laws. He probably has his eyes on The Blond Maiden (Darah Marshall), who Vaughn intends to take for his mate. So, once this little Prehistoric Peyton Place gets going, Vaughn leads a band of young hunters into the forbidden lands. A few extras bite it (one manages to invent drowning) as Vaughn and his pals encounter terrifying stock footage monsters and a pack of "wild dogs" that look about as threatening as Marmaduke. They even confront the "terrible god," a large, laughable insect-suited human. Later, Vaughn returns, tells of what he saw, and his pals all rat him out. He is shunned for a time but passes his manhood ceremony and shacks up with Darah. Chief Wild Eagle once again goads Vaughn into entering the forbidden lands, after the tribe encounters a strange rider on horseback—and kills him out of fear!

Vaughn invents the bow and arrow and heads out alone. His injured dad ain't having any of it and decides to go after his wayward son. The rest of the tribe joins Dad, just in time to meet up with the paper-mache insect-suit guy again. Wild Eagle spears him, so Vaughn kills him with an arrow. The others gather around the now dead "god" and discover it's actually a much older man with long white hair. In a voice-over by Stiffy McDeadguy, we learn this is all a post-apocalyptic nightmare. A book in his tattered radiation suit contains strange symbols (words) and vivid black, white and gray images (photographs) that show an even stranger human world, unknown to them. The old guy was actually a survivor of a long-ago nuclear holocaust who was forced to live for decades inside his radiation suit, which was once covered with deadly radioactive fallout, causing death to those he touched! Now that these tattered remnants of humanity are starting to think and learn again, will they take a different path or repeat mistakes such as racism, Vitalis, and nuclear war? Judging from the cast, they already have Vitalis! After the film, Crow and Servo pretend to be nuclear holocaust survivors, while Joel reads a fan letter. The mads make up for their earlier battle over orange cappuccino. Bonus features on Disc 1 include **I Was a Teenage Caveman**, a 12-minute documentary on the making of the film.

Disc 2 contains **Being from Another Planet** (1982, Experiment #405). On the SoL, Joel and the 'bots are playing 20 Questions. During the Invention Exchange, the mads unveil "Tragic Moments" bisque figurines; Joel demonstrates the Jack Palance Impersonator Kit. The feature is a 1991 retitling of New World Pictures' **Time Walker**. The new credits sequence obstructs the opening scenes of California Institute of the Sciences professor Douglas McCadden (Ben Murphy) exploring the tomb of the ancient Egyptian king Tutankhamun. Apparently, whoever originally discovered it in 1922 did a really half-assed job, as an earthquake in 1982 causes a wall in the tomb to collapse, revealing a hidden chamber. Inside, McCadden finds a field of unburied bodies and a mummy in a sarcophagus. The mummy is transported back to CIS (which I'm sure violated all sorts of laws and regulations regarding archaeological finds even back in the ancient days of 1982), where McCadden and his students open the sarcophagus (Crow: "A three-thousand-year-old child-proof cap?") and discover the mummy of an alien covered in a strange green fungus. The mummy is called Ankh-Venharis, or Noble Traveler. When X-rayed, the mummy receives 10x the normal radiation dose. Student Peter Sharpe (Kevin Brophy) locates a hidden compartment of gems and steals them, retaking the X-rays to cover his tracks. He sells four of the crystals to other students who are unaware of their origin. The X-rays overdose the body with radiation, causing the fungus to re-animate the mummy. At the press conference the next day, the mummy is revealed to have disappeared. Everyone just assumes that it's a fraternity prank. However, University President Wendell Ross-



more (James Karen) wants to pin the "theft" on McCadden, so that he can give the Egyptian Department's directorship to his flunky, Bruce Serrano (Sam Chew, Jr.). Meanwhile, the mummy starts killing off people in search of his jewels. These murders are presaged by green-filter "MummyVision" shots which upset Crow and Servo. The film soon degenerates into standard slasher fare, except people get slimed with corrosive fungus or tossed around as the mummy reclaims his jewels. A lot of plot exposition is wasted on the rather obvious fact that the mummy is actually a space alien. Shari Belafonte-Harper plays a radio DJ and campus photographer who pops in and out of the movie at random times, for no apparent reason. This began a career of cameos in TV shows and costarring roles in TV movies throughout the '80s. Once enough annoying college kids have been killed and the MummyVision has been overused to the point of nausea, the mummy collects his gems, sticks them in its 3,000-year-old Atari controller, and reveals himself to be—a guy in an off-the-shelf Gray Alien mask, a Mao jacket, and Lee Press-On Nails?! Crow nails this film fairly early on when he comments, "So far, this movie looks like a dramatization of a movie." During the breaks, the 'bots mock the film's mummy, and then onetime child actor Billy Mumy. The 'bots sucker Joel out of his change by blindfolding him and submitting him to the old Halloween gag of bowls of peeled grapes for eyeballs, spaghetti for worms, and a cauliflower for a brain. After the movie, Joel and the 'bots set up a shopping network to convince TV's Frank to press the button that will bring the SoL back to Earth. Bonus features include **Richard Band Remembers**, a doc on writing the music for **Time Walker**; the original version (with the original credits sequence); and trailer.

Disc 3 is **12 to the Moon** (1960, Experiment #524). On the SoL, Mike has an uncomfortable tea party with Gypsy. In Deep 13, TV's Frank roasts Dr. F. The bonus short, **Design for Dreaming**, is a bizarre promo for General Motors Motorama, a look at a "futuristic" kitchen with a performer singing and dancing like a frustrated housewife on acid. The feature starts off promisingly enough with shots of actual rockets and missiles. Then the oldest white man ever appears, introducing himself as Secretary General of the International Space Order (Francis X. Bushman). In an unspecified future, he describes the upcoming mission to the moon. Rocket Ship Lunar Eagle 1 will be crewed by 12 international specialists: The oldest, Dr. Erich Heinrich (John Wengraf) of Germany, designed the ship. The youngest is Rod Murdock (Robert Montgomery, Jr.). Dr. Selim Hamid (Muzaffer Tema as Tema Bey) is a medical doctor from Turkey. Assisting Dr. Hamid is physician/physicist Dr. Sigrid Bomark (Anna-Lisa) from Sweden. From France comes Dr. Etienne Martel (Roger Til), engineer and technician. Sir William Rochester (Phillip Baird) is a noted British geophysicist. Dr. Hideko Murata (Michi Kobi) of Japan will be acting as astro-photographer and pharmacist. The Russian Geologist and Cartographer is Dr. Feodor Orloff (Tom Conway). Dr. Asmara Markonen (Cory Devlin) is a Nigerian astronomer and chief navigator. Dr. David Ruskin (Richard Weber) is an aeronautic engineer and will be keeping the official log. The pilot is Dr. Luis Vargas (Anthony Dexter). The 12th member of the crew is the leader, Captain John Anderson (Ken Clark). The rather spacious vessel is a hodgepodge of futuristic-looking junk, repurposed machinery and plastic lounge chairs. Once launched, the rocket turns into a huge-finned reject from a '30s **Flash Gordon** serial. On the way to the moon, the crew is assaulted by meteors. Once on the moon, Drs. Hamid and Bomark discover a cavern filled with breathable air and weird crystalline cacti with exploding muffin flowers. They disappear into another cavern, which seals itself off with ice. After searching for mineral samples, they discover a crystal that glows from within and call it the Medea Stone. Dr. Orloff uses explosives to mine more samples and is severely burned by a molten liquid. Dr. Murata takes Orloff back to the rocket, while Sir Rochester disappears down a sinkhole. The mission is further threatened by an ominous message from aliens who appear to be living within the moon itself. Dr. Murata translates the alien symbols, which are similar to Japanese pictograms. They demand the Earth mission leave the moon immediately. They have the two scientists, who wish to stay behind, and they demand—cats. Seriously, they want the two cats brought on the mission for a procreation experiment. Cats. Anyway, the lunar inhabitants have weapons that could plunge parts of

Earth into another ice age and they're aiming for the United States. All of North America is threatened. The moon crew must figure out a way to save the planet or be stranded in space until they freeze. After unmasking a traitor amongst them, they neutralize the threat and decide to use their nuclear-powered space taxi to reverse the freezing process. Observing the sacrifices the crew has made to save the planet, the moonites declare that the next lunar mission will be met peacefully. On the SoL, Mike and the 'bots are playing astronauts when Nuveena (Bridget Jones), the dancing nymph from the short, shows up and woos Mike. They are going to travel to her world of the future when she reveals that the 'bots would be slaves. Mike rejects her love, so she sets her sights on...TV's Frank. The bonus featurette is **You Are There: Launching 12 to the Moon**, with film historian Jeff Burr.

Disc 4 unleashes **Deathstalker and the Warriors from Hell** (1988, Experiment #703). On the SoL, Crow has decided to get a "techno-weave" ...and wants to be called Escobar. In Deep 13, Pearl Forrester (Mary Jo Pehl) is not handling a mild case of food poisoning very well. The 'bots ask Dr. F if he wants to super-duper the experiment. The film, third in Roger Corman's quartet of **Deathstalker** cheapies, opens at a festival featuring Deathstalker (John Allen Nelson) and Nicias the wizard (Aarón Hernán). During the festival, a hooded girl arrives to see Nicias. Princess Carissa (Carla Herd) has been searching three years for the wizard, bringing an enchanted stone and hoping that Nicias has the other half. Once united, it will reveal the magical and rich city of Erendor, of which Nicias is the last living survivor. Nicias doesn't have the other half but knows it is in the possession of the evil sorcerer Troxartas (Thom Christopher). He also seeks the second stone and wants to harness its power and rule the world. Troxartas' black-clad right-hand man Makut (Augustin Salvat) and his horse soldiers attack the festival, looking for the stone. (Makut receives quite a bit of ribbing for the rather unimpressive metal bat wings bolted to his helmet.) Nicias teleports away while the princess is saved from capture by Deathstalker. She is nonetheless killed and passes the stone and knowledge on to Deathstalker. Deathstalker then travels to the South, where he encounters Carissa's haughty twin sister Elizena, who was sent from the North to marry Troxartas. Deathstalker makes his way into a valley guarded by an old warrior woman (Erika Carlsson) and her daughter Marinda (Claudia Inchaurregui). When Makut's men show up, Deathstalker and Marinda escape on horseback. Troxartas uses his power to awaken all the dead warriors he defeated to catch Deathstalker. Elizena, her guards killed by Makut, meets



Deathstalker in the woods. In the morning she is found by Troxartas, who takes her back to his castle as his bride—to the chagrin of his lover Camisarde (Terri Treas). Deathstalker trails her to the castle, where all sorts of plot threads start to come together, as Nicias returns, Deathstalker is captured and tortured by Camisarde, and a third piece of stone is revealed as a plot twist! As Servo yells in frustration during a lengthy exposition scene, "It's a simple case of what the Hell is going on!" During the rather lackluster final battle, Crow quips, "The chilling sound of cardboard against cardboard." Mike notes, "This is one of the most ambitiously bad movies we have ever done." Servo can't get over the rather unimposing look of Troxartas: "I just don't believe an archnemesis who's 5'8" and bald." On the SoL, the 'bots hold a Renaissance Festival and milk Mike for every cent he has. Crow reads to the deliriously ill Pearl from the smutty romance novel **Love's Sweet Throbbing Gondola**. While reading this week's letter, Servo forges The One Ring for Mike. Extras on this disc: **Medieval Boogaloo: The Legend of Deathstalker III**, an interview with Thom Christopher. The set also comes with four mini-posters by artist Steve Vance. All four films are closed captioned and are finally labeled as such on the box. So, we have two Joel episodes, two Mike episodes, and an even split between B/W and color films. Overall, a great offering. But then, any single episode of **MST3K** is better than an entire season of **SHIELD Agent Third Guy from the Left of Tony Stark's Limo**. ☿



## Nancy Naglin's ART-HOUSE VIDEO

### CUBA (1979) ♂♂♂1/2

D: Richard Lester. Sean Connery, Brooke Adams, Jack Weston, Hector Elizondo, Chris Sarandon, Danny De La Paz, Lonette McKee. 122 mins. (Kino Lorber) 7/16

With Cuba poised to reanimate capitalism with the Castro touch, all the Batista-era excesses, excoriated but never extirpated—corruption, cronyism, cynicism, coercion—are ready for a comeback. For a look back to the future, **Cuba**, set in Batista's last year, 1959, stars the smooth-as-silk, unflappable Connery (here, as always, even in 007 Lite mode, he drives convertibles with elan) as the appealingly amoral but highly capable Brit mercenary, Major Robert Drapes, fresh from Britain's losing battles in Africa, charged with the impossible task of turning the tide in Batista's favor. Lester's world-weary revolution flick is politically savvy and disarmingly frank about why the Castros win and why we invariably back the losers. Pre-Castro Cuba, like colonial Shanghai and Vietnam, will live forever as one of the mythical capitol of the demimonde; **Cuba** takes sexual transgression as a premise and builds a first-rate story around it. Juan Pulido (Sarandon) is a playboy ne'er-do-well, the son-in-law of a fabulously wealthy rum manufacturer, married to long-suffering Alexandra Lopez de Pulido (Adams with a very convincing exotic look and accent) who runs the business while Juan flaunts a hot affair with factory worker Therese (McKee). Naïve and horny American businessman Larry Gutman (noted character actor Weston) has recently arrived in Cuba to conclude a distribution deal with the Pulidos but can't seem to figure out revolution is around the corner. He crosses paths with Drapes, who conveniently collides with former lover Alexandra. Connery enlivens any role; he has a magisterial presence here, exuding just the right measure of sangfroid and aplomb, whether educating Gutman, petitioning Alexandra for a rematch, or being instructively cunning chasing after rebels in the cane fields. Therese's kid brother (De La Paz), a Castro supporter intent on avenging his sister's honor, juices the plot with fairly predictable results. Set in the frenzied Christmas season prior to the New Year's Eve revolution, this film catches the flavor of all the nuances of a dead time when the end has already happened and no one will accept it.

### THE DRESSER (1981) ♂♂♂♂

D: Richard Eyre. Anthony Hopkins, Ian McKellen, Emily Watson, Vanessa Kirby, Edward Fox, Tom Brooke, Ian Cunningham. 105 mins. (Anchor Bay Entertainment) 7/16

Anthony Hopkins assumes Albert Finney's 1983 role as the tempestuous Sir, the aged Shakespearean actor losing his mind, based on Ronald Harwood's 1980 play; Ian McKellen is Norman, Sir's devoted, unctuous, rebellious and irreplaceable dresser, previously acted by Tom Courtenay. Shakespearean in scope and occasionally in tone, sly, witty, heartfelt and heartbreaking, **The Dresser's** plot, replete with a tortured main character worried about his legacy, backbiting, an upstart jealous rival, and the competing desires of three powerful women—Madge (Lancashire), the troupe's manager, Her Ladyship (Watson), Sir's wife who also plays opposite him as Cordelia, and aspiring novice Irene (Kirby)—parallels the play Sir's troupe is performing in World War II-set England: **King Lear**. Yet, the main stage is Sir's dressing room, where McKellen's slightly alcoholic, devoted, one moment loving/another moment hating, possibly gay Norman battles, cajoles, worships and tricks Hopkins' stumbling, amnesiac, arrogant and randomly violent Sir into the Lear role, reminding him that the show must go on and in the process driving home Harwood and Sir's belief that theater is all that matters, a vocation for the chosen who make the grade. Theirs is a long and complicated relationship and, while Norman putters with Lear's robe, muttering about what will become of him if Sir, just that day having walked out of a hospital, can't go on, the scar tissue is laid bare: Sir is dogged by his autobiography; he hasn't written a word but the dedication makes no reference to Norman. The acting is so superb it's hard to say whose film this is. Because of the war, there's a dearth of young actors. A poignant aside, referencing Sir's obsession with ambition and age, centers on another aged actor who for the first time must play the role of The Fool. In another bit of life mimicking theater, playwright Harwood based **The Dresser** on his experience as dresser to Shakespearean actor Sir Donald Wolfit. Extras include two interesting behind-the-scenes featurettes, **From Stage to Screen** and **Master & Assistant**.

### RAMS (2015) ♂♂♂1/2

D: Grimur Hakonarson. Sigurdur Sigurjonsson, Theodor Juliusson, Charlotte Boving, Jon Benonysson, Gunnar Jonsson, Porleifur Einarrson. 93 mins. (Cohen Media) 6/16

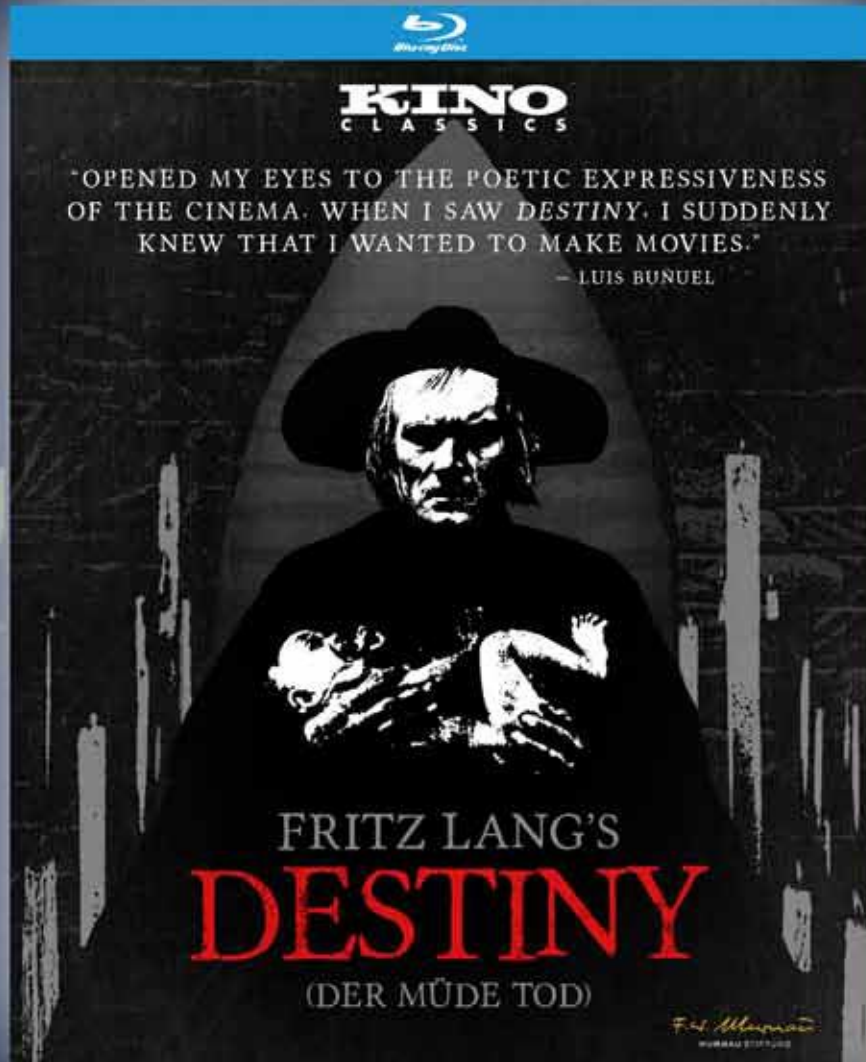
Two feuding brothers, coexisting on nearly identical Icelandic homesteads raising identical long-haired sheep, keep a watchful, vengeful eye on each other and never speak. If communication is necessary, hostile brother Kiddi (Juliusson) sends his dog to deliver a scribbled message to the seemingly more reasonable Gummi (Sigurjonsson), epitomizing all that is quirky and beguiling in director Hakonarson's highly original, unpredictable and, ultimately, haunting



script. The brothers treat the beloved sheep like pets; it's fascinating to watch them at work, being practical and inventive with farm chores, and seeing how loners—everyone in the brothers' isolated community, by necessity, is a loner—interact. What's the point of a prize ram if you haven't got the best? Elder brother Kiddi beats his brother by a fraction of a point to claim the honors, and then Gummi discovers Kiddi's ram has scrapie, a highly contagious disease meaning all the rams in the valley must be slaughtered. Kiddi, believing his brother has acted out of revenge, uses Gummi's house as a firing range. But once the authorities intervene, there's the delightful balancing act, **Fargo**-style, of stoic Icelandic technocrats interacting with these homespun Vikings. Liquored up, for example, Kiddi is found half-frozen, brought to Gummi's house and dumped naked like a slab of salted fish into the tub to thaw out. To the government inspector who thought Kiddi was dead, this is outlandish; to Gummi, it's normal. What's not normal: Kiddi, the unhinged, passed-over brother whose parents deeded the family farm to his younger sibling, discovers Gummi has secretly hidden his ram and a flock of ewes in the basement, breeding them to prevent the brothers' sheep line from dying out. But there are only so many times you can be brought back from the dead. Co-conspirators at last, they flee with their sheep into the hills, but Hakonarson leaves us wondering if the reconciliation has come too late. Extras include a director's interview, bonus short film, and theatrical trailer. ♂

# FRITZ LANG's

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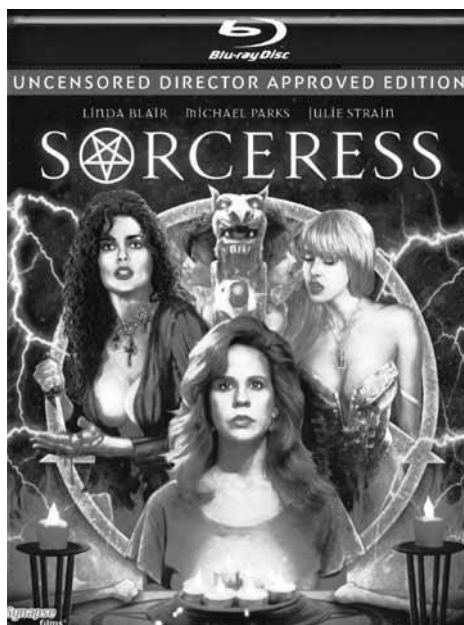
(\$19.95 DVD each)

**THE BLACK GESTAPO** (1975)

♫♫♫1/2

D: Lee Frost. Rod Perry, Charles Robinson, Phil Hoover, Edward Cross, Angela Brent, Charles Howerton, Uschi Digard. 89 mins.

In an attempt to help the community, General Ahmed (Perry) establishes the People's Army and bands together with other disgruntled citizens to take their city back from the gangsters. Unknown to the general, Colonel Kojah (Robinson) is kicking the white scum out of the neighborhoods but is still picking up protection money from scared denizens. As he grows in power, he's soon no better than the gangsters as he's overseeing the dope-selling and prostitution rackets. When Nurse Marsha's (Brent) medical clinic is fire-bombed, Ahmed sees what is really happening and confronts Kojah. Realizing what has to be done, Ahmed heads to Kojah's headquarters on a seek and destroy mission of vengeance. This is probably one of the greatest flicks to come out of the Blaxploitation era and one you probably haven't seen. It's got a mean streak a mile long and is incredibly violent. (When Marsha is assaulted and raped, her assailant is neutered in the bathtub and the offending member is flushed down the toilet.) The flick goes where few other movies in the genre go, with the black army seizing power from the white gangsters and becoming just as corrupt and power-mad. Director Frost and writing partner Wes Bishop appear as bad guys. Frost and Bishop were an amazing team who worked together on numerous drive-in exploitation flicks, including **The Thing with Two Heads**, **Dixie Dynamite**, **Policewomen** and **Chain Gang Women**, among many more. (They co-wrote the classic **Race with the Devil**, but Frost was replaced by director Jack Starrett early into production.) I have to be honest, it's tough watching Robinson play such a despicable character after growing up watching him as Mac, the lovable court clerk on **Night Court**. (And he appeared the year before as a heavy in the zombie revenge flick **Sugar Hill**.) Perry went on to star on TV's **S.W.A.T.** Howerton was in numerous low-budget movies (like **Up From the Depths**) and TV shows. Digard is on screen only to display a little poolside boobage. This is an exciting action flick, and Code Red gives it a beautiful HD makeover. I'd only seen it on various budget labels and here it looks as if it was shot this year. Extras include interviews with Perry, Robinson and Howerton, a commentary by Perry and Robinson, and the trailer. Pair it up with Code Red's **Brotherhood of Death** for an ass-kicking Blaxploitation double feature.



**TRUCK STOP WOMEN** (1974) ♫♫1/2

D: Mark L. Lester. Lieux Dressler, Claudia Jennings, John Martino, Dennis Fimple, Paul Carr, Uschi Digard, Speed Stearns. 88 mins.

Anna (Dressler) operates a truck stop as well as a motel that doubles as a brothel. She has a lucrative smuggling business on the side wherein her luscious daughter Rose (Jennings) overtakes horny truckers with her damsel-in-distress charms and hijacks their rigs. When Rose tires of the penny-ante stakes of her mom's business deals, she becomes attracted to slimy lizard Smith (Martino), a gangster from back East wanting to cut in on some of the sweet New Mexico action. Anna's beau Seago (Carr) is also trying to get a piece of the pie. Rose abandons her mother for Smith and Anna learns that Seago is up to some dirty dealings. After a ghost town gunfight and some gear-jammin' highway vehicular mischief, the film climaxes back at Anna's place where Rose reveals her true colors and simple-minded Curly (Fimple) scores his moment of heroism. You can almost imagine what this one looked like on those giant outdoor screens back in '74. Shooting in widescreen, Lester honed his action chops here with plenty of explosive mayhem and kept the story moving at a breakneck pace. Stuntman Speed Stearns was so pivotal to the plot Lester gave him a supporting role. B-movie fans will recognize Dressler as kindly Emma Washburn from **Kingdom of the Spiders**. (Her last feature was **Point of No Return**.) Costar Carr has a very recognizable face from decades of TV work. He's good and sleazy here. He was also in the action thriller **Brute Corps** (also available from Code Red). This is one of Jennings' rare turns as a despicable character who's tough to root for. Actually, I spent most of the movie waiting for Dressler to kick her ass. Fimple is fun as Curly the flake and has some scenes with drive-in bombshell Digard. Extras include an interview with director Lester as well as his running commentary. Pure drive-in fun: They don't make them like this anymore. ♫

## Rob Freese's VIDEO FLASHBACK!

### SYNAPSE FILMS

(\$24.95 Blu-ray) 6/16

**SORCERESS** (aka **TEMPTRESS**) (1995)

♫♫

D: Jim Wynorski. Linda Blair, Edward Albert, Julie Strain, Michael Parks, Larry Poindexter, Toni Naples, Rochelle Swanson. 89 mins.

Suburban witch Erica Barnes (Strain) lights a couple of black candles, smears some witch jelly across her ample bosoms and recites an incantation that results in a horrible car accident for Howard Reynolds (Albert), a rival lawyer who was just promoted at the firm where her husband Larry (Poindexter) works. Larry loses his cool when he finds Erica practicing witchcraft and, after a brief struggle, the double-D temptress takes a header from a second-storey balcony. Distraught over his wife's demise, Larry hops into bed with old flame Carol (Swanson). He confesses that he thinks Erica's ghost is haunting him. Maria (Naples), the witchy ex-maid with whom Erica and Larry enjoyed a soft-core threesome, warns Larry that evil surrounds him. Meanwhile, Amelia Reynolds (Blair), another suburban witch, is exacting revenge by possessing Carol's body and forcing her to have sex with as many of the secondary cast members as the running time permits. Howard, paralyzed from the car accident, watches from his wheelchair and pleads with Amelia to stop. It all ends with one of the most cop-out endings of Wynorski's career. This '90s-era jiggle-fest "erotic thriller" tries for a horror-lite possession subplot but doesn't quite pull it off. There's no suspense whatsoever, and no one really likable enough to care about. **Sorceress** was released to video and cable at the end of the erotic thriller cycle. It garnered a little notoriety at the time for its semi-steamy sexual interludes, but it's not nearly as wacked-out crazy as cohort Fred Olen Ray's **Possessed by the Night** (VS #10), which involves a cyclopean brain fetus in a jar that possesses a cast of sex freaks. Production-wise, the film looks great; director of photography Gary Graver knew how to effectively light the sex scenes. Wynorski cameos as an office geek and pal Ray appears as a newscaster. Motor-mouthed Lenny Julianio, late of Wynorski's **Not of This Earth** remake, and Prince Mamuwale himself, William Marshall, make brief but fun appearances. The flick is presented in a new uncensored version in wonderful high definition. This version sports the title card **Temptress** rather than **Sorceress**. (One of the first movies Wynorski wrote for Roger Corman in the early '80s, a sword-and-sandal flick about twins, was called **Sorceress**.) The disc includes two commentaries, one by Wynorski and another where he is joined by special effects master Tom Savini. (During their chat, they come up with the plot for a black mummy movie, **The Blummy**.) A thick slice of 90's erotic cheese. ♫

## SPLIT SCREEN

Axes and Picks with VS Crix  
Tim Ferrante & Scott Voisin

**Split Screen** continues last issue's format with another special challenge match between our cranky crix who each select a film for the other to view of a title he's never seen. They say crime doesn't pay, but each will reap the rewards from two criminally underrated flicks whose heist-crazed characters are evading the long arm of the law. Scott gets acquainted with Tim's pick, Robert Wise's *Odds Against Tomorrow* (1959), while Tim spends time with Scott's choice, the Quentin Tarantino-penned robbery romp *True Romance* (1993).

**Scott Voisin:** Part film noir and part social commentary, *Odds Against Tomorrow* is an interesting example of the classic "heist" film set during the racially charged 1950s. Earl Slater (Robert Ryan) is an ex-con struggling with life on the outside. He's shackled up with a well-to-do woman (Shelley Winters) while loathing his inability to make his own way in the world. A disgraced ex-cop named Burke (Ed Begley, Sr.) offers Slater a chance to solve his money problems: Be part of a three-man team for a low-risk, high-reward bank robbery. The only problem is that the third member is Johnny Ingram (Harry Belafonte), a black musician and chronic gambler who reluctantly agrees to the job because he's in debt to the mob. Both Slater and Ingram have issues with race—neither trusts the other based solely on his skin color—but in order to solve their respective financial dilemmas, they are forced to temporarily put aside their differences and work together. Despite a few minor missteps, it's an intriguing set-up that director Robert Wise executes with skill and precision.

**Tim Ferrante:** When you ask someone if they've seen *Odds*, nearly all say no, so I was pretty sure you hadn't seen it. It's an unjustly overlooked motion picture. It nudges viewer introspection by chest-poking and kindling, while coolly strumming temperamental chords of the human condition. The premise of a small-town bank heist by three complex characters is a roiling cauldron, an ugly mire that revs and revs until the film's metaphoric climax. You chose to introduce me to Tony Scott's *True Romance* (uncut version) with a screenplay by Quentin Tarantino. Top-drawer wasters unwittingly steal a suitcase filled with mob-owned cocaine. The mob wants it back; the wasters want to sell it and cash-dash into the ether. In between all this is the ghost of Elvis Presley, murders, a love affair, road trips, stoned friends and shiftless Hollywood types. It's a charmingly awkward, inventive and crazy movie of twisted love, depraved violence and nary a moral in sight.

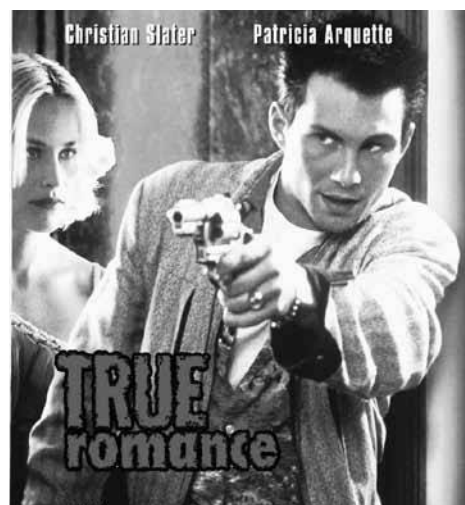


Yep, Tarantino! While I'd revisit *Odds* again and again, in *Romance*'s case once is enough.

**SV:** What? *Romance* is one of the best things to bear Tarantino's name. As much as I enjoy the man's body of work, I think *Romance* ranks higher than many of his own directorial efforts. It's a perfect combination of smart, indie storytelling and hyper-stylized Hollywood gloss. The late Tony Scott will never be mentioned in a discussion of cinematic visionaries, but he sure as hell knew how to film an action scene! Christian Slater and Patricia Arquette are wonderful as the headliners, but the supporting cast—Dennis Hopper, Gary Oldman, Brad Pitt, James Gandolfini and Christopher Walken, to name just a few—is a movie lover's wet dream come true. While *Romance* is a whirlwind of clever dialogue, memorable minor characters and pure fun that demands multiple viewings, *Odds* is a slow boiler that gives the viewer plenty of time to contemplate and digest the inner workings and actions of the protagonists. It's a good film, no doubt about it, but by the end, it provides enough food for thought without the need for seconds.

**TF:** I simply said that once was enough in regard to watching *Romance*. Its string of situations featuring quintessential examples of dumbasses is disturbingly ingratiating. I thoroughly enjoyed it, but it ain't a movie that lends itself to repeat viewings. I recently caught up with *10 Cloverfield Lane* and had a terrific time. But I don't need to see it again because the first time was the time. Like *Romance*, a revisit couldn't possibly hit the same high notes as it's basically an all-you-can-eat dessert buffet. Fun and delicious! Going back for more isn't as fulfilling. *Romance* immediately makes its vulgar case like a cannonball dive into the shallow end of the pool. The unpredictable happiness of it is that we do find ourselves rooting for the dumbasses! Empathy for lowlife murderers—something QT does so well. The film, however, flipped QT's original ending on its head where even he conceded it made more sense due to Tony Scott's direction.

**SV:** Okay, I'm not sure how you hijacked this discussion into a comparison of how rewatchable



the movies are, but I'm pretty sure no one cares. People just want to know if the films are worth viewing *once*, and we both agree they are. Unlike *Romance*, *Odds* has a couple of things going against it: The first is a scene where Johnny Ingram is confronted by a loan shark demanding payment. It's a dramatic turning point for Harry Belafonte's character, where he reluctantly agrees to participate in the heist. However, as the tension in the sequence builds, the film stops dead in its tracks to showcase Harry belting out a tune. The man was a singing sensation back in the day—half a century ago I guess this was Hollywood's version of cross-promotion—but the movie suffers for it. Another insufficiency is Ed Begley's character, Burke. As the architect of the robbery, his screen time and backstory are severely lacking, raising unanswered questions. These minor quibbles aside, *Odds* is a gamble worth taking, but for pure entertainment, *Romance* is clearly the safest bet.

**TF:** You know, it's a bit foolish to try to compare the two movies in a severely critical way. They don't even share the same "crime doesn't pay" theme. And that's why I suggested you watch *Odds*. Three hopeless men—whose corrosive baggage you described in your opening remark—convince themselves they need each other. Imagine it...they think that the only way out of their wretched circumstances is by teaming up and robbing a bank! It's a fascinating milieu of stupidity. Its broadest strength is that slow boil you spoke of—a trio of explosive character profiles in a racist social structure that's mixed with amateur criminality. The plot agitates matters further by relying upon one of the utmost successful devices for suspense: the constraint of time. The opportunity for pulling off the robbery is narrow. One wrong move collapses it entirely. The illogical risk, the bleak mindsets, the infuriating madness of it all amid such a weary and loathsome setting screams of human desperation. A simpler characterization of these films? *Romance* is definitely a popcorn movie. *Odds* is a last call gulp of cheap scotch. ☿

Have an idea for this column? Send your **Split Screen** suggestion to: phanmedia@aol.com.



# REELING BACK KING GEORGE: ROYAL SCOUNDREL GEORGE SANDERS

By Nancy Naglin

**DEATH OF A SCOUNDREL** (1956) B&W  
8888

D: Charles Martin. George Sanders, Yvonne De Carlo, Zsa Zsa Gabor, Victor Jory, Nancy Gates, Lisa Ferraday, Tom Conway, John Hoyt, Coleen Gray, Werner Klemperer, Celia Lovsky. 119 mins. (Warner Archive)

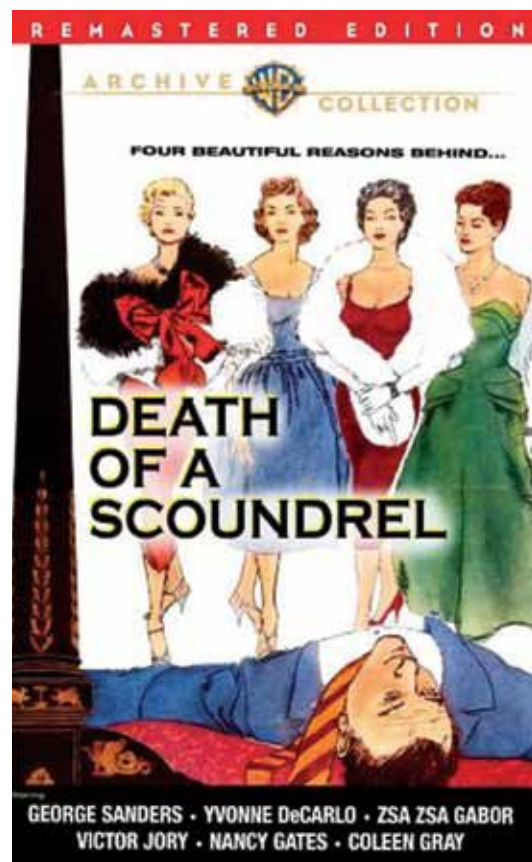
In 1972, The Talented Mr. Sanders, Hollywood's best-loved, gentlemanly cad, killed himself, at the relatively young age of 65, in a Barcelona hotel, leaving behind a note that read: "Dear World, I am leaving because I am bored. I feel I have lived long enough. I am leaving you with your worries in this sweet cesspool. Good luck." Including TV and film, the perpetually dispassionate, charismatically caustic Sanders made some 135 appearances, occasionally as something other than the **Scoundrel**—as Simon Templar early in his career in *The Saint* series (five films made in the '30s and '40s), for example (and let's not forget his astringent horror films: *Hangover Square* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*); but for ardent fans of some of his venomous masterpieces—*Bluebeard's Ten Honeymoons*, *The Moon and Sixpence*, *The Private Affairs of Bel Ami*, *All About Eve*, *Witness To Murder*, *The Seventh Sin*—he exited the stage far too early. Proudly thinking of his theatrical self as "a high-class heel," Sanders said of his roles, "I was beastly but never coarse." By the '60s, those magnificent roles had dried up, he was being offered B movies, and his various marriages had failed. In real life, Sanders was said to be acerbic and arch, disliked giving interviews, and to be left alone purposely cultivated a rude persona, and so it's as his perfectly honed Madoff precursor, Clementi Sabourin, possibly his most reprehensible role of all, in *Death Of A Scoundrel*, that we remember him best.

A post-World War II Czech refugee, presumed dead, Sabourin (Sanders) turns up at his brother's house in Argentina, only to discover his beloved Zina (Ferraday) has married his brother Gerry (real-life sibling Conway). The scoundrel immediately turns his brother over to the police for visa irregularities; in return he wants legal papers to emigrate to the States. Resisting arrest, Gerry is shot by the police. Interestingly, *Scoundrel* and *The Falcon's Brother* are the only films both brothers appeared in, each time playing brothers. Though Tom was arguably the better looking, adept at playing either the

suave good guy or suave villain, and they shared similar diction (they were born in Russia of British parents and educated in England), Tom was doomed to trail in his brother's footsteps. (One role Tom appropriated was the sexually aggressive shrink in Val Lewton's *Cat People*, though it may have been too minor for George.) Disembarking from the ship, Sabourin spies pickpocket Bridget Kelly (De Carlo) lifting businessman Leonard Wilson's (Jory) wallet. He immediately picks her up and, pretending to be cultured and love-lorn, neatly commandeers a \$20,000 cashier's check in the wallet. Kelly's pimp boyfriend (Bob Morgan) shoots the fleeing Sabourin—the pimp gets run over—and Sabourin, being stitched up, learns from the doctor about a fortune to be made buying stock in a drug company producing penicillin. Sabourin rushes to Wall Street, fraudulently plunks down his check, sells at a profit, and persuades wealthy widow Mrs. Ryan (Sanders' former wife, Zsa Zsa Gabor [he was husband number three, lasting from 1949 to 1954; out of spite Sanders was also briefly married to Zsa Zsa's eldest sister Magda, from 1970 to 1971]) to invest and loan him \$20,000. The scoundrel is now off and running with jaw-dropping schemes rooted in the only two things that matter: money and love.

The story is told backwards, with Sabourin found dead in his New York apartment and Kelly, a con artist in her own right still pining for the man who bested her in crime and romance, narrating. There isn't a single person Sabourin touches who isn't either corrupted or ruined and as the interconnected tales grow grittier—Kelly and Sabourin's stockbroker O'Hara (Hoyt) come onboard to work the cons; Wilson loses his company—the elegance of the swindles, Sanders' unnerving sangfroid and the quality of the acting produce a nearly unbearable anxiety. Even Mrs. Ryan's assistant, aspiring actress Stephanie North (Gates), is not too insignificant for Sabourin, Trump-like, to wreak exaggerated vengeance on. Sabourin bankrolls a play for her, she's a runaway star but refuses his advances; he replaces her with an inferior actress. Then there's wealthy, unhappily married Mrs. Edith van Rennasslear (Gray), who's about to be bilked. Meanwhile, Zina comes to the States to kill Sabourin, only to be won over and taken to Chicago—Sabourin is in pursuit of Mrs. Van Rennasslear—where Zina kills herself, leaving a note saying Sabourin poisoned her. To beat the rap, Sabourin brings his mother (Lovsky) to the States. She alone reckons with her son the beast when he insists she testify that he's illegitimate so he can be deported to Switzerland.

If the plot seems far-fetched, writer/director/producer Martin based the story on the sensational true-crime, never-solved 1955 murder of swindler/blackmailer Serge Rubinstein, who was found tied up and strangled in his Fifth Avenue apartment. The son of Dimitri Rubinstein, finan-



cial lender to Czar Nicolas II, Serge likewise flamboyantly went after cash and women. Many people have cause to kill Sabourin. Aside from the pleasure of the plot twists, you're kept guessing until the very end. Martin's script is flawless. Sanders, with some help from the very appealing Gates and highly competent Gabor, is in virtually every scene and carries the film, magically and effortlessly exposing the brazen and banal authenticity of the nerves-of-steel swindler. Steve McQueen, the king of physical actors, could be commanding just getting in a car. The same thing could be said of Sanders in a social setting. His lip curls, he picks up a teacup and you're hooked. Insouciant, unflappable, existentially detached, Sanders was all of those things. One thing he was not was an accomplished swordsman. Tyrone Power was. Just watch Power's extended sword-play fencing with the not-too-shabby Basil Rathbone in *Mark of Zorro*. In 1958, Sanders and Power were filming *Solomon and Sheba*. Hollywood's most skilled swordsman, then not in the best of health, endured 20 takes with Sanders when he suffered a massive heart attack. Power collapsed at the sword point of his friend and scoundrel, George Sanders. Sanders died at the time of his choosing from barbiturates. Power died dressed as King Solomon. ✂

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# BEST OF THE FESTS: 2016 BUCHEON INTERNATIONAL FANTASTIC FILM FESTIVAL

By Joseph Perry  
& Cohen Perry

South Korea's Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival (BIFAN) celebrated its 20th year with more than 300 feature films and shorts from all over the globe, with an emphasis on genre fare. The festival ran from July 21-31 and offered a huge amount of Asian, international and world premieres.

**Joseph Perry:** My favorite film from BIFAN 20 is writer/director Isaac Ezban's incredible Mexican science fiction/horror chiller **The Similar**s (2015), a valentine to 1950s and 1960s sci-fi film and television. **The Twilight Zone** is a major influence on this film, along with several other sources, including some from the 1980s. I won't mention more because a big part of the fun of watching **The Similar**s is discovering them for yourself. Ezban does much more than simply borrow from his inspirations, though. His sophomore feature film may look, sound, and feel like fear fare from yesteryear, but it also offers a distinctly modern edge, including some gruesome effects that wouldn't have been shown during the 1950s and early 1960s. The story takes place in a small bus station several hours away from Mexico City in 1968. Stormy weather has thwarted traffic across the country, and no buses are expected to arrive at or leave the station anytime soon. A group of eight people—some of whom have different, urgent reasons to leave the town as soon as possible—is stuck there when an unusual physical malady starts to affect some of them. I suggest you go into **The Similar**s knowing as little as possible about the surprises it holds. The film features crackerjack performances, compelling characters, amazing direction, and first-rate cinematography, along with a sound design and score that perfectly fit the mood of the tale. Ezban doesn't merely ape what he loves; he blends his influences together skillfully and passionately, concocting a cinematic delight that will make viewers smile and sometimes laugh between the shuddering. I had caught Ezban's debut feature film **The Incident** at South Korea's Jeonju International Film Festival in 2014 and enjoyed its **Twilight Zone**-like approach to characters being trapped in a sort of time loop, so I was keenly interested in his follow-up effort. While you're waiting for the latter to play at a film festival or a big screen near you, keep an eye out for Ezban's terrific **The Incident**, coming soon on home-video.

**The Similar**s instantly made my list of top 10 fright films of the year so far, as did the Polish-Israeli **Demon** (2016). This modern adaptation of Jewish folklore should appeal greatly to fans of art-house horror. Directed by Marcin Wrona, who adapted the screenplay with Pawel Maslona from the play **Clinging** (also translated as **Adherence**) by Piotr Rowicki, **Demon** focuses on Piotr (Itay Tiran in a standout turn), who has moved from London to his fiancée Zaneta's (Agnieszka Zulewska) family home in rural Poland, where they will have their wedding. Unfortunately, just before the big day, Piotr unearths a disturbing discovery near the house, after which his behavior changes dramatically until all hell breaks loose at the wedding. Piotr may be possessed by a *dybbuk*, a malevolent spirit that inhabits the body of a living person until it is exorcised. Some, including Zaneta's father, believe, or want to believe, otherwise. Boasting first-rate performances from its ensemble cast and marvelous direction by Wrona, **Demon** is one of the most unusual horror films in recent memory.

Another BIFAN favorite is director Fede Alvarez's nail-biter **Don't Breathe** (U.S., 2016, Sony Pictures). Alvarez wrote the script with his **Evil Dead** remake co-writer, Rodo Sayagues. The two take the basic premise of a home-invasion tale and add some new spins. Rocky, played by **Evil Dead** remake star Jane Levy, desperately wants to flee her abusive home in Detroit for the sunny promise of California. She plans to fund her escape by robbing homes with her boyfriend Money (Daniel Zovatto) and her crushed-out cohort Alex (Dylan Minnette). The trio attempts to rob a blind war veteran's (Stephen Lang) home but the man desperately protects his turf. That's all you need to know going in regarding the plot; anything more reps venturing into spoiler territory. I felt more tense throughout **Don't Breathe** (titled **Man in the Dark** in South Korea) than I did during any other recent film. I consider this to be more thriller than horror, but it definitely has its horrific moments. Levy is very good as Rocky, but Lang as the would-be robbery victim gives a tour de force performance. Alvarez ratchets up the suspense in classic fashion, injecting his film with a Hitchcock-plus-a-shot-of-adrenalin rush. This was an absolute blast to watch with a sold-out film-fest audience.

I confess to being a hard sell when it comes to zombie movies, whether comedy or drama, and the Austrian effort **Attack of the Lederhosen Zombies** (2016) did little to change my mind, although its production values, performances, and gore gags make it worth a watch. Three professional snowboarders find themselves in the middle of a zombie outbreak at a ski resort, caused by a chemical leak from a snow-making

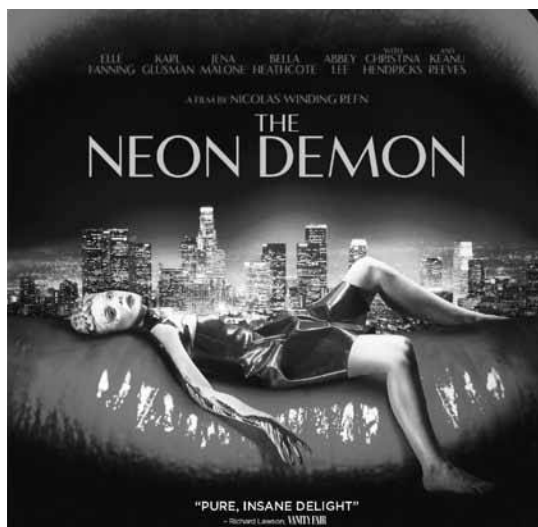


machine. The humor sometimes misses its mark—for example, using clichéd or out-of-date English slang as punch lines—but the movie has a big heart and some excellent set-pieces. Margarete Teisel shines in an outstanding supporting perf as tavern owner Rita, who takes no undead prisoners when the attacks get underway. The film is a good-looking, slick entry into the European zomcom genre with enough originality to elevate it above the middle of the usual zombie-movie hordes.

**Cohen Perry:** What would happen if you combined all the horror movies from the last 20 years into one product? You'd get **Villmark 2** (aka **Villmark Asylum**, Norway, 2014), director Pål Øie's sequel to his 2003 **Villmark**. The story, a watered-down mixture of well-worn fright-flick clichés, is almost entirely hijacked from **Session 9**—itself not the greatest horror fare but better than **Villmark 2**. An asbestos crew has to clear out a giant asylum marked for destruction. Honestly, the crew deserves everything it gets; within minutes of the film's start, its members break so many safety codes that you can't possibly believe these people work in the industry. This careless m.o. is compounded by the fact that the characters blithely blow off major red flags and wildly unrealistic situations because they want to finish the contract early. Nothing is believable, the story is clumsily stapled together, and it rips off so much of **Session 9** that I'd recommend just watching that film instead.

**JP:** Writer/director Babak Anvari's **Under the Shadow** (UK/Jordan/Qatar, 2016) works well as a feminist take on life in Tehran during the Iran-Iraq War, but I believe it is far less effective as a horror film. I feel that it is lacking in truly frightening or suspenseful moments, and I found its protagonist Shideh (Narges Rashdi) and her young daughter Dorsa (Avin Manshadi) to be unsympathetic characters. I'm likely in the minority with these feelings, though, as **Under the Shadow** won BIFAN's Jury Prize for feature films. Rashdi turns in a solid performance as a woman who has been denied reentry to medical school because of earlier political displays. Her doctor husband thinks she should put her university plans to rest, which leads to a big argument before he is sent off to help out with war casualties. After his departure, a bomb lands in the family's apartment building without exploding. Strange things begin happening to Shideh and Dorsa, which leads at least one neighbor to suspect that a djinn—an invisible spirit—is haunting them. Interesting cinematography and a sense of dread help **Under the Shadow** pick up a bit in its second half.

**The Tag-Along** (Taiwan, 2015), from debutting director Cheng Wei-hao, is full of Asian ghost-film clichés but still manages to be entertaining. A great deal of the credit for that goes to a spirited performance from Tiffany Hsu Hwei-ning, who toplines as radio DJ Yi-chun, an independent young woman who is ready for neither marriage nor children, unlike her realtor boyfriend Wei (River Huang). When Wei's grandmother becomes part of a spate of disappearances in the area, Wei gets entangled in the mystery. The film deals with the idea of a *mosien*, a ghost that appears as a monkey or a small child and drives people insane through their sense of guilt. Despite such weary tropes as multiple scares that turn out to be dream sequences and CGI entities, **The Tag-Along** packs enough brio to warrant a recommendation.



If the rest of the Danish/Swedish film **Shelley** (2016) lived up to what its eerie score, sound design, and unsettling isolated atmosphere promise, it would have been a frightening offering. Unfortunately, I can't even classify this movie as a slow burn because it fizzles out without anything of real consequence happening. A young Romanian mother (Cosmina Stratan) moves to a rural area without her young child to work as a housekeeper for a wealthy Danish couple (Ellen Dorrit Petersen and Peter Christoffersen) who live off the grid, with no electricity and only a single land line telephone. The couple displays some odd behavior that is never explored very deeply, but the housekeeper eventually agrees to become a surrogate mother for them anyway. That's about it, really. **Shelley** has style and good performances going for it, but little in the content department.

The Taiwanese effort **The Tenants Downstairs** (2016) is beautifully shot with some good performances but is basically a well-dressed torture porn outing under the guise of a black comedy with some social commentary. Simon Yam stars as a landlord who first spies on and then gets involved with the lives of his tenants. The film is an exercise in depravity and wallowing in human misery that ultimately becomes an unrewarding endurance test.

Another flawed dark horror with some comedy is Argentina's **The Rotten Link** (2015). The first half slowly, and I mean *slowly*, introduces the characters in its rural setting, including mentally challenged lumberjack Raulo (Luis Ziemkowski), his prostitute sister Roberta (Paula Brasca), and their ailing witch doctor mother Ercila (Marilu Marini). An act of violence occurs that makes Roberta think her mother's prophecy will come true—that the girl will die after sleeping with every man in the town. There's a twist and, after that, director Valentin Javier Diment piles on more disturbing behavior for what amounts to little more than shock value, while the last reel sees a sudden turn into slasher-film territory. The humor never worked for me, the tone felt more pandering than unsettling, and by the time the final act came around, I was no longer invested.

Director Agnieszka Smoczyńska's **The Lure** (Poland, 2015) is a colorful, high-reaching smorgasbord of techniques and ideas that makes for a



unique viewing experience; in the end, though, style wins out over substance. Mixing horror, romance, musical, fairy tale, drama, and other elements, **The Lure** tells the story of mermaid sisters Silver (Marta Masurek) and Golden (Michalina Olszanska) who long to travel to America but find themselves becoming the top attraction at a Warsaw night club as singing strippers. The sisters have a taste for the high life as well as for human blood. Silver falls in love, which Golden knows could be fatal to their highly successful act, at the very least. Olszanska's hypnotic performance and wide range of facial expressions are reason alone to give **The Lure** a try, but the film's eccentric characters, directorial vision, and sheer chutzpah provide extra motivation.

One of the quieter but nonetheless powerful offerings at BIFAN was writer/director Bobby Miller's feature-length debut **The Master Cleanse** (Canada/U.S., 2016). With elements of comedy, horror, psychological drama, and fantasy, the film spans these genres without falling too heavily into any one. This is a wholly unique effort focusing on Paul (Johnny Galecki in a magnetic turn), who has been unmotivated in life since his fiancée jilted him. He sees a TV commercial for a spiritual retreat in the mountains and grows interested in an actress named Maggie (Anna Friel) at a meeting for potential participants. As luck would have it, both are chosen for the retreat, and after some instruction by guide Lily (Anjelica Huston), begin their three-day juice fast with a rather nasty concoction. The drinks have quite an unexpected effect; Paul vomits up his psychological baggage in the form of a creature. I'll avoid further spoilers, but Miller takes the story down a quieter, more reflective path than the average creature feature thriller. Oliver Platt portrays retreat founder Ken Roberts as rather level-headed while still giving off a slight cultish vibe. The practical creature effects are well done on a low budget and reap the reactions Miller intended.



**CP:** In the wake of the Coen brothers' **True Grit** and Quentin Tarantino's **The Hateful Eight**, the resurgence of the western is in full swing, and director J.T. Mollner's **Outlaws and Angels** (U.S., 2016, Sony Pictures), featuring Francesca (Daughter of Clint) Eastwood, is an ambitious attempt at a solid entry in the genre. **Outlaws** gets all of the core mechanics right—solid acting, great costume design, well-built sets, and superb cinematography—but even though scaffolding stays strong throughout, the story is rapidly left in the dust; halfway through, I found myself wondering, “What is this movie even about?” The film starts with a violent bank heist, where viewers are introduced to the four outlaws who push the story as they make their run to the Mexican border. It was a bold decision for Mollner to have us follow a group of repugnant bank robbers, considering the fact that even though we are meant to hate them, we are essentially stuck with them for the remainder of the film. They are closely tailed by Josiah the bounty hunter, played by Luke Wilson, more usually associated with comic roles (e.g., Mike Judge's prescient satire **Idiocracy**). Josiah is by far the most interesting character, but even though he's the nominal protagonist, he plays a minor, if not insignificant, role in the plot. For a two-hour movie, very little happens. As the outlaw gang comes up on a secluded house, the film begins to turn into a western version of **The Last House on the Left**, where we are forced to watch prolonged mental torture with no plot development. It seems like a good 40 minutes could be cut without losing the integrity of the story. The plot ends up twisting and turning, and while I must admit that some of it sucked me back in, it was far too little, far too late.

**JP:** In the thriller department, director Kyo-shi (**Cure**, **Pulse**) Kurosawa delivers a winner with **Creepy** (Japan, 2015), the tale of detective-turned-lecturer Koichi Takakura (Hidetoshi Nishijima), his wife Yasuko (Yuko Takeuchi), and the freaky man with whom they become next-door neighbors, Nishino (Teruyuki Kagawa). While Takakura gets involved with investigating a six-year-old family disappearance cold case because of a request from his former assistant Nogami (Masahiro Higashide), Yasuko becomes more intrigued by the mystery of their neighbor. Nishino is outstanding as an enigmatic weirdo who somehow influences seemingly rational people with behavior that ranges from spine-tingling attempts at charm to arrogance and bullying. When Nishino's odd-acting teenage daughter Mio (Ryoko Fujino) is added to the mix, matters grow even more complicated. Another pivotal character is Saki (Haruna Kawaguchi), the daughter of the missing Honda family. Performances are solid throughout, as is Akiko Ashizawa's unflinching cinematography, and the sound design and soundtrack are subtle

enough that sudden shocks are effectively magnified. When Kurosawa gives viewers our first glimpse of what truly goes on inside Nishino's home, it is an unsettling scene indeed. Gripping from start to finish, **Creepy** genuinely earns its title.

If you have fallen behind on watching Asian action films, the entertaining but unoriginal **Chongqing Hot Pot** (China, 2016) is a fun, if slight, way to catch up. Three friends want to expand their unsuccessful restaurant to make it more attractive to potential buyers. When the renovation starts, the trio accidentally digs its way into a bank vault. Other subplots—including a bank robbery by one gang and one of the restaurant co-owners being hassled by another gang for a gambling debt—pave the way for a humorous, action-packed climax that doesn't hold any surprises. Spirited interpretations of clichéd characters (including a gambling addict with a soft side [Chen Kun] and a middle-school friend [Bai Baihe] who never lets her true feelings be known) and well-choreographed fight sequences help put director Yang Qing's offering squarely in the crowd-pleaser category.

**The Bodyguard** (aka **My Beloved Bodyguard**, China, 2016, Well Go USA), Sammo Hung's first directorial effort since 1997, is heavier on pathos than action. Hung also stars as Ding, a retired Central Security Bureau officer suffering from the early stages of dementia. Befriended by a young girl named Cherry (Jacqueline Chan), who lives near him, and flirted with by his landlady (Li Qinqin), Ding mostly spends his days feeling guilt-ridden over the long-ago loss of his granddaughter while under his care. His old martial-arts skills—well, a few of them, at least—come back to him when Cherry's father (Andy Lau) runs afoul of a deadly criminal gang and the baddies seek out the daughter. Hung's clashes consist mostly of blocking opponents' strikes with his arms and hands and fighting back in the same manner. When other characters go at it, the action picks up a bit but is more generic than fans of the genre might like. The emphasis is on Ding's possibly coming to terms with his past before his dementia worsens. Though the drama is a bit heavy-handed at times, the ending is quite touching.

**Bitcoin Heist** (Vietnam, 2016) is fast-paced, high-spirited, and a lot of fun, with several twists and turns, some of which work better than others. Special Agent DaDa (Kate Nhung) assembles a team of criminals to apprehend The Ghost, a hacker wanted by Interpol. The ragtag team includes pickpocket turned magician Jack Magique (Petey Majik Nguyen), who happens to be an ex-flame of hers, along with an accountant (Teo Yoo) for The Ghost who agrees to help find the criminal if the police protect him, a father-and-daughter con artist duo (Jayvee Mai The Hiep and Lam Thanh My), and a computer game champion who is also a highly skilled hacker (Suboi). Naturally, there is little honor among



thieves here, which provides for both laughs and tension; even if things seem overblown at times, director Ham Tran's **Bitcoin Heist** is chock full of verve and charm, with a bold color palette, intriguing set design, and crisp cinematography. I highly recommend it for viewers in the mood for action fare that will put a smile on their faces.

**Sailor Suit and Machine Gun: Graduation** (Japan, 2016) has been billed as a “spiritual sequel” to 1981's **Sailor Suit and Machine Gun**. Having not yet seen the original version, I cannot compare the two. **Graduation** looks great, with marvelous sets and crackerjack cinematography, but for a film about a teenage schoolgirl who heads up a yakuza gang and that promises a machine gun in its title, the affair is rather tame. Izumi Hoshi (J-pop singer Kanna Hashimoto) is a high school student who used to lead the Medaka gang after the murder of her uncle; her former underlings now help her run a small cafe. The Medakas made a peace pact with former rivals the Hamaguchi gang, but the latter group is accused of recruiting some of Izumi's classmates as escorts and also selling a new form of drug to the students. Yasui (Masonobu Ando), a gang boss who hides behind seemingly legitimate corporate fronts, comes to town, and as chaos grows, Izumi makes an alliance with a Hamaguchi member (Hiroki Hasegawa) and restarts the Medaka gang. Equal parts coming-of-age story, social commentary drama (particularly regarding aging populations in Japan), and crime film, director Koji Maeda's **Sailor Suit** has a slick look to it but is ultimately jumbled. Hashimoto is charming as the conflicted Izumi and most of the rest of the cast turn in good performances, but Ando borders on scenery chewing. **Graduation** feels like it wants to cut loose and get crazy to the level that many fans of Japanese crime film expect but it never does. Instead, it fizzles out to a feel-good entry in the genre.



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**In Search of the Ultra-Sex** (France, 2015) is a **What's Up, Tiger Lily?**-style project in which writer/directors Nicolas Charlet and Bruno Lavaine fashion a science-fiction comedy from old porn films without the hardcore scenes. The Earth's inhabitants are being taken over by rampant lust but a space patrol is on the case. The premise sounds funny but the humor tends to be far more juvenile than I expected.

Director Penny Lane's **Nuts!** (U.S., 2016) is a fascinating, highly entertaining documentary that uses animation and historical footage to tell the story of "goat gland doctor" John R. Brinkley, who rose to infamy in the early 20th century because of his goat testicle impotence "cure." He also became one of the first American radio stars. When the truths start overpowering the doctor's own version of his life, it's like a punch to the gut.

Another fun documentary is **Raiders! The Story of the Greatest Fan Film Ever Made** (U.S., 2015, Drafthouse Films). Directors Jeremy Coon and Tim Skousen tell the often jaw-dropping story of Eric Zala and Chris Strompolos, two childhood friends who began making a shot-for-shot fan film remake of **Raiders of the Lost Ark** in 1981 when they were 11 years old. By 1988, they had completed every scene except the airplane landing pad battle sequence. Thirty years later, the friends finally had the opportunity to realize their childhood dream and finish the film. **Raiders!** is an inspirational story of trials, tribulations, the power of holding on to childhood dreams, and the sheer magic of cinema.

Other BIFAN offerings included Bernard Rose's **Frankenstein** (U.S., 2015, Alchemy), a well-acted, intriguing variation on the classic tale placed squarely in a modern setting; Nicolas Winding Refn's **The Neon Demon** (France/U.S./Denmark, 2016, Broadgreen), a slick, dazzling, yet distanced horror take on the competitive lifestyles of Los Angeles models, starring Elle Fanning; **Take Me Home** (Thailand, 2016), a haunted house tale that I found to be confusing and overwrought; **Manhattan Nocturne** (aka **Manhattan Night**, U.S., 2016, Lionsgate), a modern film noir tale that ranges from corny to captivating, starring Adrien Brody as a New York newspaper reporter who becomes involved with the widow (Yvonne Strahovski) of a mysteriously murdered filmmaker (Campbell Scott); **The Phoenix Incident** (U.S., 2016, Freestyle), a testosterone-fueled, found-footage science fiction movie that feels like you are watching someone else play a video game (never as fun as playing one yourself); and **Creature Designers: The Frankenstein Complex** (France, 2016), a marvelous behind-the-scenes look at special effects from silent film through today, with an emphasis on the late 20th century.✂

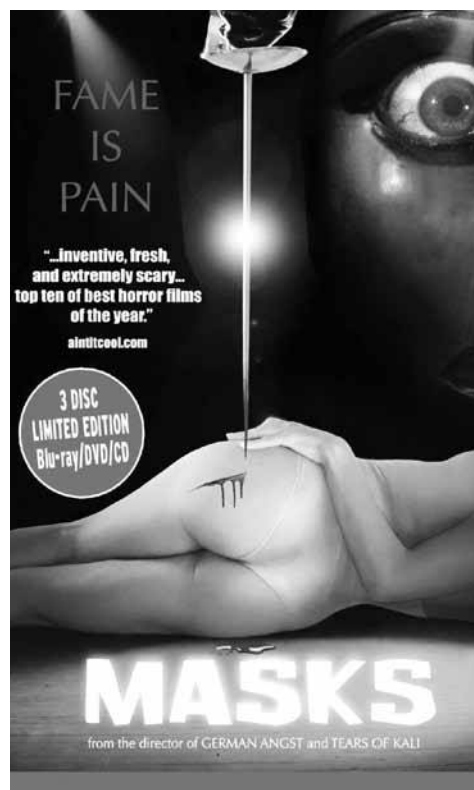
## The Phantom's JOY OF SETS

### FILM FINDS

Cult Epics founder Nico B and film producer Steve Aquilina team up to launch a new extreme horror label, Reel Gore Releasing, with a brace of fresh releases. In the tradition of Dario Argento's 1977 scare classic **Suspria** comes Teutonic filmmaker Andreas Marschall's **Masks**. The 2011 chiller sees aspiring actress Stella (Susen Ermich) uncover horrific secrets at a Berlin acting school. Reel Gore's 3-disc Blu-ray + DVD + Soundtrack CD edition (\$39.95) arrives with a wealth of special features, including behind-the-scenes segments, deleted scenes, a music video clip, trailer & slideshow, plus a 24-page booklet. The German-language film comes equipped with optional English and Spanish subtitles. In **Violent Shit: The Movie** (2015), director Luigi Pastore relocates the notorious German underground serial killer Karl the Butcher to contemporary Rome for a fresh giallo take on the character's infamous exploits, replete with an appearance by veteran giallo thesp Giovanni Lombardo Radice and cameos by Italo cult auteurs Enzo G. (**The Inglorious Bastards**) Castellari and Luigi (**Contamination**) Cozzi. Extras include a making-of documentary with director Pastore, bonus interviews with cast members, Pastore, and producer Steve Aquilina, along with trailers & slideshow and a 24-page booklet. The Blu-ray + DVD set contains a third disc, a soundtrack CD by legendary Goblin artist and original **Suspria** composer Claudio Simonetti (\$39.95). The film has English and German-language options, along with optional subtitles. Due soon from Reel Gore: Luigi Cozzi's film-festival fave **Blood on Melies' Moon**.

On the action front, Olive Films celebrates all things **American Ninja** with a quartet of titles (\$29.95 each Blu-ray). The original 1985 Michael Dudikoff/Steve James team-up, **American Ninja**, kicks in with an audio commentary by director Sam Firstenberg and documentary producer Elijah Drenner, plus the doc **A Rumble in the Jungle: The Making of American Ninja**. **American Ninja 2: Confrontation** features a Firstenberg/Drenner commentary and the behind-the-scenes **An American Ninja in Capetown: The Making of American Ninja 2**. Steve James joins a new **American Ninja**, David Bradley, for **American Ninja 3: Blood Hunt**, with the featurette **Strike Me Deadly: The Making of American Ninja 3**, and a David Bradley audition tape. Finally, Dudikoff and Bradley join forces for **American Ninja 4: The Annihilation**, complemented by **Last Tango in Lesotto: The Making of American Ninja 4**.

In the Asian Invasion arena, Criterion Collection contributes a new 4K digital restoration of King



Hu's lavish 1975 martial arts epic **A Touch of Zen** (\$39.95 Blu-ray). Bonus material includes a 2012 documentary focusing on director Hu, new interviews with actors Hsu Feng and Shih Chun, filmmaker fan Ang Lee, and film scholar Tony Rayns, along with additional essays and 1975 Cannes Film Festival press kit excerpts. Kino Lorber and Redemption unleash the Uziga Waita manga-based Japanese black comedy **Mai-Chan's Daily Life The Movie: Bloody Carnal Residence** (\$29.95), arriving with the behind-the-scenes documentary **Waita's Daily Life**. Film Movement Classics issues the early Takeshi (Beat) Kitano dark-humored pulp crime thrillers **Boiling Point** and **Violent Cop** (\$29.99 each Blu-ray).

Cohen Media salutes French filmmaker Philippe de Broca with a Blu-ray double bill yoking the auteur's early (1961) black-and-white romance **Five Day Lover**, starring Jean Seberg, Micheline Presle and Jean-Pierre Cassel, with his gala 1997 historical swashbuckler **On Guard**, featuring Daniel Auteuil, Fabrice Luchini and Vincent Perez. **On Guard** extras include interviews with de Broca, Auteuil, Perez, and other cast members, along with behind-the-scenes segments, original and re-release trailers, and more.

The dedicated archivists at Cinelicious Pics rescue a reel rarity from underserved oblivion—Leslie Stevens' raw, controversial 1960 black-and-white crime noir **Private Property**, starring Warren Oates, Corey Allen and Kate Manx—with a new 4K restoration. The 2-disc Blu-ray + DVD combo pack (\$34.99) includes an interview with still photographer and technical consultant Alex Singer, a new essay by Don Malcolm, and the original U.S. theatrical trailer.

## TELE-VIDEO

### READY FOR CRIMETIME

Acorn Media goes the law enforcement route with the UK show **Line of Duty Series 3** (3-disc \$39.99), wherein Detective Sergeant Steve Arnold (Martin Compston) and Detective Constable Kate Fleming (Vicky McClure) continue their pursuit of corrupt cops in six new episodes; bonus material includes a behind-the-scenes featurette and photo gallery. Edwardian-era Toronto supplies the setting for the acclaimed Canadian series **Murdoch Mysteries Season 9** (5-disc \$59.99), starring Yannick Bisson as Detective William Murdoch and Helene Joy as his wife Dr. Julia Ogden, with cameos by such famous contemporaneous figures as author Lucy Maude Montgomery, temperance crusader Carrie Nation, and Mark Twain (the last played by William Shatner). In addition to all 18 Season 9 episodes, the set offers **Making Murdoch** featurettes and a photo gallery. Contemporary Canada furnishes the milieu for **19-2 Season 2** (3-disc \$49.99), furthering the exploits of Montreal lawmen Ben Chartier (Jared Keeso) and Nick Barron (Adrian Holmes) in 10 new episodes; extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and interviews. Elsewhere, a failing car dealer (Adam Fergus) is driven to desperate measures in the acclaimed small-town Ireland-set miniseries **Clean Break** (2-disc \$39.99), written by Billy (The Eclipse) Roche.

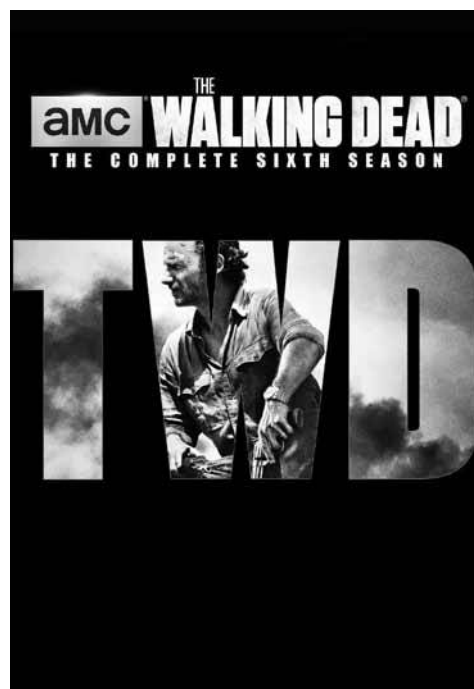
Essie (The Babadook) Davis headlines as Miss Phryne Fisher, a fashionable "lady detective" solving dangerous crimes in 1920s Melbourne with a little help from her maid "Dot" Williams (Ashleigh Cummings) and Constable Hugh Collins (Hugo Johnstone-Burt). Acorn's gala new Blu-ray set, **Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries Series 1-3 Collection** (8-disc \$119.99), gathers 34 episodes, along with a wealth of bonus features, including over 90 minutes of behind-the-scenes featurettes, cast interviews, character clips, set tour, promos, photo galleries and more. Marta Dusseldorf stars as a senior crown prosecutor investigating a series of possibly linked crimes in **Janet King Series 1: The Enemy Within** (\$59.99); the 3-disc set arrives with a behind-the-scenes featurette and photo gallery. Another famous femme investigator returns in the popular Northumberland-set mystery series **Vera Set 6** (4-disc \$59.99), showcasing award-winning actress Brenda Blethyn as Detective Chief Inspector Vera Stanhope in a quartet of fresh cases. Detectives Martha Bellamy (Fay Ripley), Jack Weston (Damien Molony) and Charlie Steele (Clare-Hope Ashitey) form a formidable investigation team on the track of everything from arson attacks to copycat killers in the eight-episode **Suspects Series Three & Four** (2-disc \$49.99). Acorn goes behind the

scenes in a pair of stand-alone documentaries, **David Suchet: Being Poirot**, profiling the prolific actor best known for portraying Agatha Christie's wily eponymous sleuth, and **Foyle's War Revisited** (\$14.99 each), focusing on the long-running UK mystery series; both DVDs arrive with bonus interviews.

MHz Choice chronicles the early adventures of an Italo TV hero in two new sets. **The Young Montalbano Episodes 7-9** topline Michele Rondino as a novice police chief in Vigata, Sicily, embroiled in a trio of cases—**The Man Who Followed Funerals**, **Room Number Two**, and **Death on the High Seas**. The investigations continue in **The Young Montalbano Episodes 10-12: The Settlement**, **The Honest Thief**, and **An Apricot**. In **Detective Montalbano Episodes 27 & 28**, Luca Zingaretti assumes the role of an older Montalbano in two installments, **A Delicate Matter** and **The Mud Pyramid**; the set includes an extensive interview with the mystery series' creator, **Montalbano and Me: Andrea Camilleri**, as well as Q&As with star Zingaretti and director Alberto Sironi. The subtitled Italian-language sets are tagged at \$39.95 each.

MHz likewise journeys to France to retrieve a trio of intrigue-laden series. Pierre Arditi stars as Benjamin Lebel, a renowned French wine expert and author recruited by local police to help solve difficult cases in his vineyard-rich region, in **Blood of the Vine Season 4** (\$29.95). The double-disc set contains three new mysteries—**The Sulfate Sprayer Massacre**, **Thunder in the Corbieres** and **Black Wine Chaos**. Gallic TV invokes a legendary English mystery master in **The Little Murders of Agatha Christie** (3-disc \$39.95), wherein old-school Superintendent Larosiére (Antoine Duléry) and his more modern-minded young partner Inspector Lampion (Mario Colucci) investigate five Christie-based cases: **The Moving Finger**, **Five Little Pigs**, **The Ebb and the Flow**, **The Knife on the Neck**, and **Sleeping Murder**. MHz travels back to 18th century Paris and the novels of Jean-Francois Parot in **Nicolas Le Floch** (2-disc \$29.95), where the eponymous police commissioner looks into **The English Cadaver** and **The Drowned Man**.

FBI agent Liz Keen (Megan Boone) resumes her pursuit of criminal mastermind Red Reddington (James Spader) in Sony Pictures Home Entertainment's **Blacklist: The Complete Third Season** (5-disc Blu-ray \$79.95). The set comes equipped with copious extras, including the featurettes **Creating the Stunts: Script to Screen**, **From the Shadows: Villains of Season 3**, **Outside the Box: Making the Blacklist Comic Book**, **All About Aram**, **Red's Gems: Favorite Lines from Season 3**, plus deleted and extended scenes, episode commentaries and more. Low-key old-school sleuth Jim Rockford (James Garner) returns to take on a slew of '70s cases in Mill Creek Entertainment's collections **The Rockford Files Season One** and **Season Two** (4-disc \$14.98 each).



### DEADHEAD DELIGHTS

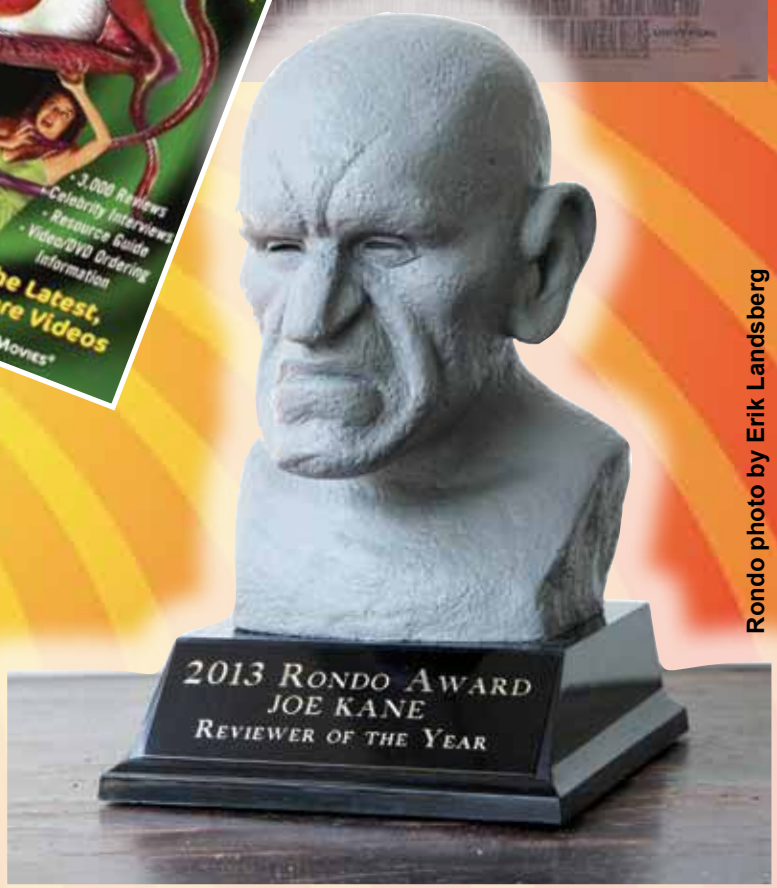
The ever-popular zombie hordes and their human battlers—including series regulars Andrew Lincoln, Norman Reedus, Lauren Cohen and Tovah Feldshuh, joined by such fresh faces as Ethan Embry and Jeffrey Dean Morgan—are back for more mayhem in **The Walking Dead: The Complete Sixth Season** (5-disc Blu-ray \$79.99, DVD \$69.98). Bonus features include multiple audio commentaries, deleted scenes, **The Making of The Walking Dead, 601: Out of the Quarry**, **Guts & Glory: The Death of Nicholas, Negan: Someone to Fear**, and **The Face of Death: Iconic Walkers of The Season**, among others. **Episode 616: Last Day on Earth—The Extended Version** appears on the Blu-ray set only, while **Inside The Walking Dead** is a DVD exclusive. Elsewhere, crime-fighting zombie sleuth Liv Moore (Rose McIver) bounces back for more brain-munching adventures in **iZombie: The Complete Second Season** (Warner Home Entertainment, 4-disc \$39.99). The set contains all 19 Season 2 episodes, costarring Malcolm Goodwin, Rahul Kohli, Robert Buckley and David Anders, along with the bonus featurette **iZombie: 2015 Comic Con Panel** and deleted scenes. Not to be outdone on the TV terror front, E One Entertainment offers the Syfy werewolf saga **Bitten: The Final Season** (3-disc \$39.98), starring Laura Vandervoort as lycanthropic heroine Elena Michaels in all 10 Final Season episodes; extras include **A Look at the Final Season** featurette, and deleted/extended scenes. HBO Home Entertainment prescribes **The Knick: The Complete Second Season** (4-disc \$24.98), Steven Soderbergh's early 1900s NYC-set medical series, starring Clive Owen as a brilliant if cocaine-loving surgeon. Copious bonus features include several making-of segments, along with behind-the-scenes featurettes, cast and crew audio commentaries and more. 8



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Rondo photo by Erik Landsberg



# CORTLANDT HULL: INSIDE THE WITCH'S DUNGEON!

As Told To  
Don Vaughan

Cortlandt Hull is a Monster Kid's Monster Kid. The grandnephew of Henry (**Werewolf of London**) Hull, he was just 13 when, assisted by his mother and father, he established what would become The Witch's Dungeon Classic Movie Museum, a chamber of frights chock full of life-size recreations of popular horror characters crafted by Hull and his talented team. Located in The Bristol Historical Society in Bristol, Connecticut, the museum celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> consecutive season this year. In addition to running The Witch's Dungeon, Hull is an artist and documentary filmmaker whose films include **The Phantom of the Opera: Unmasking the Masterpiece** (VS #88) and **The Aurora Monsters: The Model Craze That Grippped the World**. In a wide-ranging interview from his home in Bristol, Hull talked to the *'Scope* about the origins of The Witch's Dungeon, his long friendship with Forry Ackerman, and the thrill of working with the legendary John Zacherle.

**DON VAUGHAN** You're related to Henry Hull, the star of the horror classic **Werewolf of London**. How did that association influence you as a Monster Kid growing up?

**CORTLANDT HULL** How many people can say their uncle was a werewolf and their aunt was a murderess? Because my great aunt was Josephine Hull, who was one of the lovely little old ladies who murdered old men with poisoned elderberry wine in **Arsenic and Old Lace**, not only on the stage but also in the film. So I have a werewolf and a murderess in my background! Unfortunately, Aunt Josephine died when I was very small, so I never really got to know her. She was my great aunt through marriage; she married Henry Hull's brother, Shelly Hull. But she kept the Hull name when she became an actress on stage.

**DV** What do you recall about your grand-uncle Henry?

**CH** For one thing, he had a wonderful sense of humor. And what a lot of people don't realize is he was a very talented makeup artist in his own right, and that's why I always like to dispel the ridiculous rumor that he rejected the preliminary [**Werewolf of London**] makeup for vanity purposes. It was actually due to one thing wrong: The way the script

was written, two of the characters recognized him when he was the werewolf as being Dr. Glendon. And Henry said, "If I had that full makeup, there would have been no way that the audience would have bought the idea that two of the characters recognized me." That's solely what it was about. It had nothing to do with him rejecting the makeup because he had worked with Jack Pierce before on **Great Expectations** in very heavy makeup for Magwitch, the escaped convict. So that rumor, which has been going around for God knows how long, is ridiculous. I have pictures of Henry in makeup that he did himself as Edgar Allan Poe on the Broadway stage and as Mark Twain. He was one of the first to tour in a one-man show as Mark Twain. A lot of the stage actors did their own makeup in the early days, it wasn't just Lon Chaney. And Henry was very talented at it.

**DV** Henry Hull passed away in the '70s, correct?

**CH** Yes. I knew Henry when I was a teenager into my very early 20s and I constantly would ask him all sorts of questions about **Werewolf of London**. I was fascinated by it. And he had an amazing memory. He could remember the color of the makeup, the color of the costumes, details like that. I remember one time he said to me, "My dear boy, you grill me like a cheese sandwich. You do know I made over 70 other movies!" He had this funny way of being somewhat irritated, but still he loved the fact I was so interested in his work. He really appreciated that. And don't forget that he was also in **Master of the World** with Vincent Price. I got to know Vincent through Henry and a mutual friend of Vincent's, a continuity person he worked with in England named Barbara Roland. Vincent became a great friend for many, many years. As a matter of fact, I even did some artwork for him. He preferred to send postcards rather than letters because he could write quick notes to people, so I designed personal postcards for him which had him in the center from **Master of the World**. On one side it had him from **House of Wax** and on the other side **Dr. Phibes** and above was **The Raven**. He loved sending out those postcards.

**DV** As a Monster Kid, what were your greatest influences growing up? What informed you regarding the Universal monsters and other pop culture horrors?

**CH** Let's face it, I was a weird little kid. I loved going to wax museums, but I was always disappointed because when they said they had a chamber of horrors it was really torture devices. I wanted to see classic movie monsters, but back



Just For the Hull of It: Model maker Cortlandt Hull honors family horror-film heritage with his **Werewolf of London** creation.

then there wasn't anything like that. Another influence was building the Aurora model kits, but more so, I was fascinated with the beautiful paintings that James Bama did on the covers of the Aurora kits. When I made the life-size figures later on, I used colored lighting to sort of emulate what both James Bama and Basil Gogos did with their cover art. So a lot of things influenced me from the beginning. But you have to realize that in the 1960s, there were no "haunted attractions" as they're called today. About all we had was bobbing for apples and trick-or-treating. So I felt there should be something honoring the makeup artists and actors who were in these films. I was very fortunate because I got to know Forry Ackerman and when I was about 11 or 12 he introduced me to Don Post Sr., and eventually through Don I met Verne Langdon and John Chambers, and through John I eventually got to know Dick Smith. As I said, I was very fortunate. I do not think this would happen today; everything is so business-like. But back then, they thought, "Isn't it amazing that this kid wants to build a museum." So all of these wonderful, talented people wanted to help me. That was really unique. Besides that, I had a very understanding family and very talented as well. My mom, Dorothea Hull, had done professional costuming on the stage and even some work on Broadway, so she was able to re-create some of these costumes, and she said I was the worst taskmaster she ever had to deal with because I wanted them to look as close to the movies as possible! And then I was lucky that my dad was a painting and decorating contractor but he also did a lot of wood-working, so he built the original Witch's Dungeon. Within the first two years, we had to double the size of that. We never thought that so many people would come to it. It was just amazing. People would line up for hours to see it.

**"I learned far more from John Chambers, Verne Langdon and Dick Smith than I ever learned in college."  
Cortlandt Hull**

*DV* There's a photo on your website of you as a kid visiting Forrest Ackerman at the Ackermansion. What are your memories of Forry? And what do you recall of your visit to his remarkable home?

*CH* When I was there as a kid, that was the old, original Ackermansion on Sherbourne Drive, and it was just amazing then. People who saw Forry's house many years later, it was nowhere near what it was then. He had amazing props. The makeup artist William Tuttle had given him all the **Seven Faces of Dr. Lao** makeups that he did with Tony Randall, and they were just spectacular. He had one of the coins thrown on the stage in **Mighty Joe Young**. Dick Smith had given him the one and only head he created for the television production of **The Picture of Dorian Gray**, and Ray Harryhausen had given him some models from **Earth vs. the Flying Saucers** and the Ymir from **20 Million Miles to Earth**. It was just amazing. It's sad to note that over the years, light-fingered visitors stole a lot of Forry's stuff. Starting when I was 12 or 13, I was the person who did all the frame blowups that were in **Famous Monsters of Filmland**. I learned how to do it, and I had a lot of friends who had 16mm prints of movies. I never got credit for it, but from about 1965 or '66 on, if you saw any frame blowups in the magazine, I did them. I loved Forry, but he seldom gave



Sarah Karloff communes with image of famous father Boris at The Witch's Dungeon in Bristol, CT.

credit for things. As a matter of fact, his wife, Wendy, was very angry at him because I hadn't gotten credit for the blow-ups. Forry had gotten an exact replica of his Dracula ring, made in solid white gold, for Christopher Lee, which Lee wore in every Dracula film starting with **Dracula Has Risen From the Grave**. Well, Wendy said to Forry, "You know, you have an extra one of those Dracula rings. You've never given Cortlandt credit for all he's done for the magazine—give him the ring!" So it was really due to Wendy that I got the Dracula ring. She insisted on it, and it's one of my prized possessions because it's identical to the ring Christopher Lee wore in the later Dracula films. I did an interview with Lee, and he said he wore the ring in honor of Bela Lugosi.

*DV* Did Forry ever get a chance to visit The Witch's Dungeon?

*CH* Oh, yes. He actually stayed here one weekend. That was back around 1971. He and Wendy came out here and spent the weekend and I managed to get 16mm prints of various films, some that I had and some that other collectors had, and we had a film festival all weekend long. It was great fun. Forry, especially, loved it because it was a private showing.

*DV* Tell us how The Witch's Dungeon came to be.

*CH* I was 12 when I created my first figure, and that was my own creation, Zenobia the Gypsy Witch. I actually made her the year before we opened, and that was the inspiration to do more. I have to tell you, I wouldn't have been able to do what I have done without encouragement and insight from Don Post Sr., John Chambers, Verne Langdon and, a little bit later, Dick Smith. You couldn't ask for a better group of people to have behind you. Later, I went to art school—I went to the University of Hartford and I have taught film and makeup at the college level over the years. But I have to be honest, I learned far more from

John Chambers, Verne Langdon and Dick Smith than I ever learned in college.

*DV* How many figures does the museum currently feature?

*CH* Now that we have expanded, there are roughly 22 figures, and we keep adding more because the new venue is so much larger than the old building. The sets also have become more elaborate, and those were done by my friend Bill Diamond. We're a nonprofit organization and Bill is president of our board of directors. Bill has his own studio and he has built some of our more elaborate sets, such as a complete castle facade for Dracula and an amazing set that is the entrance to The Witch's Dungeon. He also created a whole pipe organ set for the Phantom of the Opera.

*DV* Did you create all of the characters yourself?

*CH* Most all of them. Other sculptors have worked on some of the heads, but generally, even at that, many of them I have done the paint work or the hair work. I always make the full figure myself and I'm involved with the costuming as well. One that I'm most proud of is the Beast from **La Belle et la Bête**, the 1946 French version of **The Beauty and the Beast**. That was one I had wanted to do for a long time. That was a joint effort between myself and a wonderful costumer named Audrey Wellner. That's an amazing costume. We worked together on it because I knew just how it needed to be. I picked out all the materials for it. Dante Renta did beautiful hair work on it, and Dan and Barbara Jorgensen created the intricate necklaces for the Beast. The head piece was sculpted by Cathy Tharp. It was a joint effort between several of us to make this figure. If others are more adept at certain areas, I work with them because to do this you can't be a master of everything. When you want to make something truly accurate, it's best to work with someone who knows more than you do in some areas.





**“The nickname they had for me was the Norman Bates of Bristol.”**  
**Cortlandt Hull**

*DV Which figure was the greatest challenge for you?*

CH Actually, Bela Lugosi as Dracula was quite challenging because his face is very difficult to get just right. It's not really makeup, it's the man himself. To get the nose, the cheeks, everything in the right proportion is really difficult to do. The other one that I really loved doing because it was one of my favorite Vincent Price characters is the skull-type head from **The Abominable Dr. Phibes**. Many others have done it but for some reason they mustn't have started with a life cast of Vincent Price under it. That's what I did—I started with a life cast of Vincent and then worked all this on top of it. That's how you get the proportions right. Even though he's pretty much defined by that skull head, if you don't get the size of the head right or the shape of it correct, it's not going to look like Vincent as Dr. Phibes.

*DV Which actors or characters would you still like to make?*

CH I definitely would like to do one of Fredric March as Mr. Hyde and Christopher Lee as both Dracula and the Frankenstein Monster. We don't have a figure of Lee in the museum and I would like to have them both. Another I would like to do eventually is Ming the Merciless because my mom made a perfect costume of the old Charles Middleton

Ming the Merciless and I would like to make a figure to put the costume on. So that means eventually I would have to do one of Buster Crabbe to go with it!

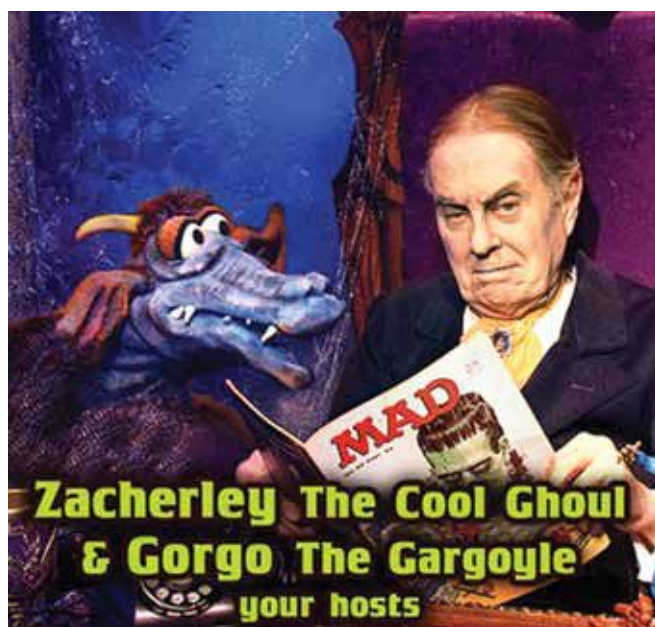
*DV How do you compare to-day's monster movies with the classic Universal films? Are you a fan of the current trend in horror?*

CH Not really. One fairly recent favorite was Tim Burton's **Sleepy Hollow**. And I very much enjoyed **The Woman in Black** because it was suspenseful, as well as **The Conjuring**. But the sad thing is, there hasn't been much in the way of good monster characters in recent years.

What I love about the Universals and also the Hammers is that their legendary monsters are almost like fairytales. That's what's so much fun about them. It's not like a serial killer who is killing people in a bloody way; that doesn't appeal to me. What does appeal to me is a makeup artist and actor combined who create a character that is memorable and impactful and has some pathos to it. Another character I would like to do eventually is Charles Laughton as the Hunchback of Notre Dame. This is a character that I love. But my favorite character of all time in classic horror is Lon Chaney Sr. as the Phantom of the Opera. I was very ill as child; I had a very rare blood condition. Robert (Psycho) Bloch was a great friend of Forry Ackerman, and when Bloch asked me who my favorite classic horror character was, I immediately said the Phantom of the Opera. And he said, “I knew it!” He said, “Forry told me about you and the rare blood condition you had and he said, due to your illness, you were away from other kids your age and turned to art, and because of this experience you could relate to Erik with his seclusion under the catacombs of the Paris Opera House and his artistry with music.” When I was in high school, they always thought I was sort of strange because of my movie museum. The nickname they had for me was the Norman Bates of Bristol. So I told Bob Bloch about that and he got a big kick out of it. And so did I, because isn't it better to be weird than just plain boring?

*DV Is The Witch's Dungeon a full-time gig, or do you have a regular day job?*

CH As a matter of fact, I have taught film and makeup at the college level, but primarily I am a freelance artist. I have done murals, portraits and, a few years ago, I painted the complete top of the Rod Serling carousel in Binghamton, New York. I did scenics of all the key episodes of **The Twilight Zone** because this was the carousel that Rod Serling rode as a boy. They were restoring it and had me do all the scenics on the top border.



*DV How did you decide which episodes to feature on the carousel?*

CH I asked a lot of friends about their favorite episodes, and I put in one of my favorites, **The Howling Man**, which was about the devil chained up in a monastery. It's not one of the big, popular episodes, but it's one that I enjoyed. I also had **Nightmare at 20,000 Feet**, **Time Enough at Last**, **To Serve Man** and of course **Walking Distance**, which was inspired by this carousel. There are others, but those are the key ones. These paintings are huge. They form the top border of the carousel, so each painting is nine feet long and two and a half feet high. I had quite a deadline to meet—I had to do 16 paintings in about five months. I was working on two at a time. I would work on the background on one, and while that was drying I would work on another.

*DV In addition to the museum, you've gotten into documentary filmmaking, including The Phantom of the Opera: Unmasking the Masterpiece and The Aurora Monsters: The Model Craze That Grippped the World. What compelled you to go into documentary filmmaking?*

CH It was because I had watched a lot of documentaries, and what annoyed me about them was they would have a whole list of people who were in it, but most were just sound bites. They were just one or two lines that an actor said about the film, and I wanted to see a full interview with these people. Over the years I had gotten to know a lot of actors and makeup people and I thought, “I'm going to sit down with them and do a full-fledged interview.” Most of the interviews in my documentaries are no less than four minutes and most are around seven. I wanted it to be as if you were having a cup of coffee with these people and talking about their careers. I wanted it to have a sense of intimacy, and people have said they felt that.

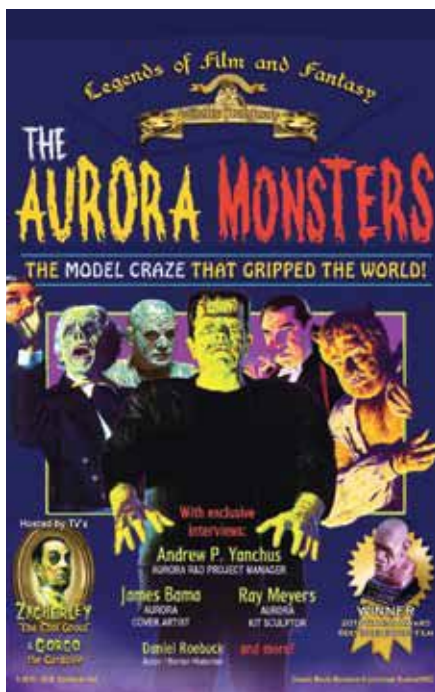


**“Even though I wrote a script for him, the way he deviated from the script was even more fun.”**

**Cortlandt Hull on John Zacherle**

*DV What were the greatest challenges in making Phantom of the Opera: Unmasking the Masterpiece?*

*CH* That was my favorite, and it was quite a challenge. I had to ask a lot of friends of mine to find the rarest pictures possible because I purposely did not want to show photos that people have seen over and over again. One of my friends, Wes Shank, has an amazing collection of Chaney Phantom photos, but some of the photos and posters were in difficult condition, let's put it that way. Either they were faded or there were tears or folds, because some of them were more than 80 years old. So I had to do major restoration on them. I restored more than 800 photos and posters for that documentary alone. It doesn't seem like it because it just flows past you. The Aurora documentary I loved doing because John Zacherle has been a great friend for many years, and I was able to convince him to host it. Between Bill Diamond and myself, we built special props for him—more than what he ever had on his old TV show. He was like a kid in a candy store; he had more fun with the props we built for him. He's very improvisational and even though I wrote a script for him, the way he deviated from the script was even more fun. It worked very well.



**To Serve Man:** One of 16 signature TZ scenes CH painted for Binghamton's Rod Serling carousel.

*DV You've met a lot of famous people through The Witch's Dungeon, including Mark Hamill, June Foray and Victoria Price, among others. How have these individuals influenced your life?*

*CH* I have to say that June Foray is one of the sweetest ladies around. It's funny how that came about. I knew Mae Questel before I knew June. Mae was the voice of Betty Boop and Olive Oyl. She lived in New York City and we had a mutual friend. I had met Mae sometime before, around the early '80s. I told her I wanted a unique voice for my witch Zenobia. Before that, I had taken bits and pieces of June Foray's witch voice that she had done, but I wanted a recording that was just for Zenobia and I knew that Mae had done the voice of the Sea Hag on **Popeye**. She said to me, "I don't do that good a witch. You need to get in touch with June Foray." I told Mae I didn't know June, and she said, "I'll call her up!" So she called and had me talk on the phone with June, and June said, "I'd love to do it for you," and June and I have been close friends ever since. She is one of the sweetest ladies you'd ever want to know. She has done several recordings for me. You may not know it, but June was the voice of Talky Tina in the **Living Doll** episode of **The Twilight Zone**. She did the original voice of the Chatty Cathy doll, and that is why Rod Serling had her do the voice of Talky Tina. Some people don't make that connection. Talky Tina was the dark side of Chatty Cathy.

*DV You have presented certain museum figures at various conventions around the country. What kind of reaction do you get from people who are seeing them for the first time?*

*CH* Some people have seen articles about The Witch's Dungeon in magazines over the years, but when they see them in person, the reaction I have gotten the most is that they look even better in person than they do in photographs. I consider that a high compliment because I want you to really feel it's like looking at that character. As I noted, one of my favorites is the Beast from **La Belle et la Bête**. When I did it, a lot of my friends said, "You're out of your mind—no one will know what that picture is." I said, "I don't

care, it's one of my favorites." By coincidence, a few months before we premiered the figure at Wonderfest in Louisville, Kentucky, Turner Classic Movies starting running **La Belle et la Bête** a lot. So by the time we premiered it, everybody was saying, "I just saw that on Turner Classic Movies and it looks just like it. Is that the original costume?" So that was a really great compliment.

*DV When is the museum open?*

*CH* We're open every Friday, Saturday and Sunday in October from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. We've had a wonderful association with the Bristol Historical Society, which is the new location of the museum.

*DV What does the future hold for The Witch's Dungeon? What do your fans have to look forward to?*

*CH* If the Bristol Historical Society can get an elevator put in, we will have a good chunk of the second floor of that building. It was built in 1890 and has great atmosphere. If we can get that, we will be adding a lot more sets and we're going to expand a little more into classic science fiction movies such as **This Island Earth** and most likely **Planet of the Apes** as well because I have a lot of the pieces made by John Chambers that were actually used in **Planet of the Apes**. To give you an idea of what it's like, as you enter the building we have a great number of display cases with original movie props or makeups that were given to me by Dick Smith, John Chambers and others, such as the under and over mask that was used for the mutants in **Beneath the Planet of the Apes** and some of the ape makeups. I have one of the two original heads of Linda Blair from **The Exorcist**, and the old-man head Smith created of Dustin Hoffman from **Little Big Man**. How often do you get to see original pieces like this up close? These individuals blazed the trail for the makeup artists who followed. ☿

For further information about The Witch's Dungeon Classic Movie Museum, visit [preservhollywood.org](http://preservhollywood.org).



## CULT-MOVIE MILESTONES: *CARNIVAL OF SOULS*

**CARNIVAL OF SOULS** (1962) B&W

8888

D: Herk Harvey. Candace Hilligoss, Sidney Berger, Frances Feist, Stan Levitt, Art Ellison, Herk Harvey. 78 mins. (Criterion Collection Blu-ray, 2-disc DVD) 7/16

Longtime industrial-film honcho Harvey's lone foray into feature filmmaking may yet represent the ultimate triumph of talent and care over budgetary constraints. **Carnival of Souls** works both as a straight-ahead, literally dead-on chiller in an understated but genuinely eerie Val Lewton vein and as a vivid dramatization of a mental breakdown, as ultra-alienated Mary Henry (an indelible Hilligoss), after surviving a car crash, finds herself drifting ever further from reality. Director Harvey (who doubles as one of the cadaverous phantoms pursuing our ever-endangered heroine) contrasts the determinedly mundane details of Mary's daily life (spent in such unotherworldly locales as Lawrence, Kansas [home base of Harvey's Centron Films company] and Salt Lake City) with the haunting nocturnal images of a pier-front pavilion where the title specters perform a whirling *danse macabre*. While **Carnival's** cult rep had grown steadily via its regional TV airings over the decades, few viewers saw it in its entirety and sans disruptive commercial breaks. Several public-domain VHS titles pounced on the pic early on, but only Sinister Cinema carried the complete original print until VidAmerica's VHS edition, which featured an intro by Harvey, appeared following the film's 1989 limited theatrical reissue. Rising above the cut-rate DVDs still floating on the market, Criterion Collection's Blu-ray edition presents a new, restored 4K digital transfer, complete with a select audio commentary by the late Harvey and scripter John Clifford (interviewed in **VS** #16). Other extras include **The Movie That Wouldn't Die!**, a documentary on the '89 cast and crew reunion, **The Carnival Tour**, a 2000 update on the film's locations, deleted scenes, outtakes accompanied by Gene Moore's radical organ score, a video essay by film critic David Cairns, and more. Several **Mystery Science Theater 3000** collections include some of Harvey's early Centron shorts (e.g., **Why Study Industrial Arts?**) which display little of the brilliance that would inform **Carnival of Souls**, one of the elite horror films of all time. Steer clear, meantime, of the deservedly obscure 1999 Wes Craven-presented remake-in-name-only **Carnival of Souls**. **X**

—*The Phantom*

## Filmmakers in Focus: HERK HARVEY ON *CARNIVAL OF SOULS*

We had the privilege of speaking with Herk Harvey, a visionary auteur and class act, during **Carnival of Souls'** theatrical re-release in 1989.

**PHANTOM** When did you first become aware that **Carnival** was a cult movie?

**HERK HARVEY** I think it was when I started getting letters, usually from young people in New York and California. They would call the chamber of commerce in Lawrence, Kansas, and they'd say, "Do you know Herk Harvey?" And my name is *Harold* Harvey. So they'd say, "No, hell, we don't know him." So finally they got used to it and would send me the letters. And I answered some of these kids. I went to a festival at Olympia, Washington, and they wanted me to introduce the film. I was looking at the audience and I said, "You know, none of you were probably born when this film was made: 1961." There probably weren't over 10 or 15 people [there] who were born then.

**PHANTOM** Were you ever tempted to go back and "correct" **Carnival's** glitches, like the footsteps?

**HARVEY** The way I feel about the film is that it's almost like colorizing. I can remember so well the night that I did the footsteps, sitting there with a piece of 3/4-inch plywood on my lap and two high-heeled shoes, beating them on the plywood. Then when I looked at it, I thought, "God, that's terrible." But I gotta show this, I gotta go to print stage, I can no longer fool around 'cause we're running out of money—so it went. And I wouldn't change that today. People can say, "God, that's really out of sync and some of that dubbing in the very front—*God*, that's out of sync!" As a filmmaker, when I watch that film—and I've watched it an awful lot of times now with the festivals, more than I'd want to admit—it's like Chinese water torture. But I wouldn't change it, because that was the way it was. We had \$17,000 cash to make it. We were just in an absolute frenzy that last week to get it done, so we could actually come in on budget, because we had to save \$600 so I could take a trip to New York to talk to Embassy Films about distribution. And we came in exactly on budget. It wasn't a case of saying *this is good*. It was just a case of *had to have it*.

**PHANTOM** I don't think anyone was prepared for the dancing scenes in 1962. The closest thing might be **Beauty and the Beast**.

**HARVEY** Well, that's exactly where I got a lot of the feel, from Cocteau. The one that made a terrific impression on me was when she goes down the hallway—I couldn't figure if they had her on



a roller or what—but it's like she's floating down the hall, and that wind is blowing on her. The face in the fireplace, the hands with the chandeliers, those were all great.

**PHANTOM** The music is a strong element.

**HARVEY** It's interesting. I *hate* organ scores usually. A man in Kansas City used to play the organ in the Orpheum Theater. At that time, he wasn't scoring movies, he would just play before the movie. But there was a huge pipe organ he used to play. He said, "I'll write you an original score for this if you're interested." And I was, so he did it. I sent him the 16mm version, and he scored it to that, did it on a Thomas organ, an electronic organ. And when I first heard it, I thought, "Eh, okay." But it really didn't have some of the elements that I wanted. And yet, I think that's one of the strongest features of the film today. The synthesizer wasn't big in those days, and he created on that organ sound effects, really, that helped things go along. Like when she's in the car and beginning to have motor problems. You know, to score that with an organ—a car having trouble—I couldn't imagine that. And yet it works. One of the things about organ music, calliope music and carnival music, if it's a little off, if it goes a little minor, it really gets strange. For some reason, it goes back to the thing of having fun and tragedy being that close, to laughing, then serious, then getting way out. There's also library music in there. The scene where she goes to Utah, with that pretty orchestration coming in—I don't know what library it was, one of the libraries we had in the film company there. You buy a library, and if you use one minute, you pay for one minute's worth—that's the way most of them were scored.



Director Herk Harvey strikes **Soulful** pose.

It does take a little bit of *getting with*. Several times at showings, I've had people come and say, "I'm real sorry people laughed at that." And I said, "That's great! If they're laughing at it because it's camp, it *is*. There's humor in it; we intended for people to laugh. The scenes with John Linden [Sidney Berger], where he's talking about college, and his character in general. And the landlady [Frances Feist]. If that's not comedy, then I sure missed the boat, because that's what I intended.

Years later, I wrote a show on wind wagons, called **The Wind Wagon**. I went over to the library and checked. In the early days, because of the winds in Kansas, people got the idea they could make these sailing wagons, to sail on the Santa Fe Trail, from Westport, Kansas to Santa Fe. So I had this Irish guy, who was "Windwagon Smith," who comes to Westport and tries to persuade them to make a wind wagon to see if this would work. And there's conflict and love and all that. This came very close to getting done. The Theater Owners of America decided to make four or five films themselves. The president of the Theater Owners of America showed them the script and they were interested and got me an appointment to go back and see Gordon Douglas, the director. He had some time off, so I spent a weird weekend in a swimming pool talking about, "Yeah, well, James Cagney would play Windwagon." And I said, "Burt Lancaster." And he says, "No, Cagney owes me a film. We'll shoot it in England." And I said, "It's gotta be shot in Kansas!" And he says, "No, no, we're gonna shoot it in England. They've got great plains, and I've got money tied up in England I can't get out."

We never made a cent from **Carnival**. Oh, I take that back! Once a year I'd get a call from either the Waverly or the Thalia saying, "Could we rent **Carnival of Souls** for the New York University students for Halloween?" And I'd send it to them and I'd get a check for \$100. Which just barely covered the postage. ☘

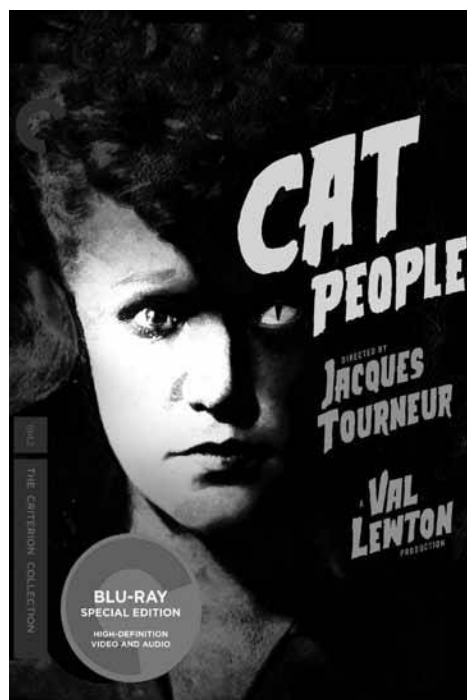
## CULT CATNIP: CAT PEOPLE REDUX!

**CAT PEOPLE** (1942) B&W ☘☘☘☘

D: Jacques Tourneur. Simone Simon, Kent Smith, Jane Randolph, Tom Conway, Jack Holt, Jane Randolph. 73 mins. (Criterion Collection, (\$39.95 Blu-ray) 9/16

The first of legendary RKO producer Val Lewton's "quiet" horror films, directed by protégé Tourneur, **Cat People** chronicles architect Oliver Reed's (Smith) troubled marriage to withdrawn immigrant Irena (a haunting Simon), who's convinced she's part feline and ultimately provokes an emotional struggle with her All-American rival Ann (Randolph). The film's subtly disturbing atmosphere (e.g., the pool sequence) and painstakingly choreographed shock scenes (smug shrink Conway's comeuppance at Simon's real or imagined claws) fully retain their original power. Novelist/film critic James Agee earns posthumous props for recognizing Lewton's genius early on, helping establish the latter's cult status long before the word was routinely applied to filmmakers working the B-movie beat. The "Doom of the Cat-Men" sequence in Vicente Minnelli's 1952 **The Bad and the Beautiful** was partly based on Lewton's Hollywood experiences. Criterion's sleek new Blu-ray edition arrives with a 2005 audio commentary by film scholar Gregory Mank, excerpts from a vintage Simone Simon audio interview, the feature-length 2008 documentary **Val Lewton: The Man in the Shadows**, a 1977 Q&A with director Tourneur, a new interview with fan/cinematographer John Bailey, and an essay by critic Geoffrey O'Brien. Hopefully, Criterion will continue to issue further remastered Lewton scare classics. ☘

—The Phantom



## CARNIVAL OF FREAKS!

**MALATESTA'S CARNIVAL OF BLOOD** (1973) ☘☘1/2

D: Christopher Speeth. Janine Carazo, Jerome Dempsey, Daniel Dietrich, Lenny Baker, Herve Villechaize, Chris Thomas. 74 mins. (Arrow Video) 2/16

We begin with an uncomfortable Tarot Card reading by a transvestite fortune teller (Baker), then meet the Norris family, beginning a new life as carnies for the weird Mr. Blood (Dempsey). Their teenage daughter Vena (Carazo) has a boyfriend but falls for the cute boy who runs the Tunnel of Love attraction (Thomas). The park's owner, Malatesta (Dietrich), is a vampire who lives in a pit below the rollercoaster with a tribe of undead workers who crave blood and spend their days watching silent movies. Unknown to Mr. Blood, the Norris's are actually looking for their son, who went missing after visiting the park. Vena has some pretty messed-up dreams. Villechaize shows up as Bobo, a creepy dwarf, but good luck figuring out what he's saying. The flick plays more like a protracted nightmare in a demented brain than as a linear story. Nothing makes much sense, it's tough to discern what most of the characters' motivations are, and stuff just seems to happen for no apparent reason. Sleazy carny ambience oozes through every frame; the amusement park is a landscape of twisted shapes and misplaced objects. If the story itself makes your mind wander a bit, director Speeth compensates with some beautifully realized camerawork at times. (Then there are times when the characters stop for a chat and a tree branch blocks their faces.) The soundtrack (possibly the "Psychoacoustics" work by Dr. Sheridan Speeth?) is better than what you would expect. Brit film journalist Stephen Thrower enthusiastically introduces the film, which is appropriate since his tome **Nightmare USA** was where I first read about it. Even at a brief 74 minutes I found it to be a bit too long. Arrow shows much love to this scraggly little pup and presents the remastered film with a plethora of extra features that include interviews with Speeth, writer Werner Liepolt and art directors Richard Stange and Alan Johnson, as well as outtakes, a stills gallery and a commentary by Richard Harland Smith. In addition to **Malatesta**, Arrow's **American Horror Project Vol. I** offers equally tricked-out special editions of the offbeat 1970s chillers **The Premonition** (VS #99) and **The Witch Who Came from the Sea** (VS #54). ☘

—Rob Freese

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## '60s SHOCKERS!

### ARROW VIDEO

(\$39.95 2-disc Blu-ray) 5/16

#### BLOOD BATH (1966)B&W

Movie(s) ♂♂1/2/Blu-ray ♂♂♂♂

D: Rados Novakovic, Jack Hill, Stephanie Rothman. William Campbell, Merissa Mathes, Lori Saunders, Sandra Knight, Karl Schanzer, Patrick Magee, Sid Haig, Jonathan Haze. 95, 81, 62, 79 mins.

All right, so what we have here is your basic Roger Corman pick-up flick that was released in no fewer than four different versions; its various releases and re-releases stretch over a couple of years and cover every way you can see a film, from theaters and drive-ins to late-night TV. Starting in 1963, Rados Novakovic delivered what was a pretty straight art heist under the film's original (first?) title **Operation Titian**. An old man is murdered and a famous painting is stolen. Magee is a creep trying to get his hands on the stolen art and figures in as a major player in the plotline, as does Campbell, who is also trying to find the missing artwork. Unhappy with the results (and not thinking it commercial enough for the American market), Corman went back to re-edit the film completely, with Rothman filming a couple extra scenes. (Novakovic was credited as director under the name Michael Road.) Running 14 minutes shorter, the film begins with a high-energy striptease (as opposed to a shadowy stalking) and the same basic plot speeds along at a much quicker pace. Magee is now a disgruntled husband out to get Campbell for cheating with his wife. (Amazing how a couple of newly dubbed lines can change an entire character.) It showed up on TV with a package of other AIP flicks under the title **Portrait in Terror**. Still suffering sleepless nights over the twenty thousand he invested in the flick years before, Corman instructed Jack Hill to re-shoot scenes to use with **Operation Titian** footage for the shortest version, known as **Blood Bath**. In this version, Magee is not really in the picture except fleetingly, and Campbell is now a stark raving lunatic, haunted by the ghost of a former lover. Haig and Haze are a couple of hepcat artists who inadvertently get mixed up in the terror. A beautiful ballerina plays into the crazed climax. Hill gets a little artsy with some dream scenes out in the desert. Finally, with a little more tinkering by the ever-clever Rothman, we have the version that is probably the most known, **Track of the Vampire**. Sharing directing credits with Hill, Rothman concocted a plot about vampire artist Campbell and his stalking of young nubile women and beatniks. At some point, the film was put on a double feature with **Queen of Blood** under

the **Blood Bath** title, but I think it was the **Track of the Vampire** cut that was shown. Confused yet? This is an incredible journey as one simple film was transformed numerous times into different films that, in my opinion, were never any better than the last incarnation. It's dumb fun whichever version appeals to you—nothing that was ever supposed to be anything more than the bottom half of a double bill. Arrow archivists deserve major props for their tireless remastering of all four versions. The HD transfers are nothing less than incredible. Copious extras include **The Trouble with Titian Revisited**, a visual essay by Tim Lucas chronicling the many changes of the four versions, interviews with Haig and Hill, a booklet with new writings on the film and more. I watched all four versions in one marathon sitting, which proved to be equally frustrating and fascinating. To see how each of these films transformed from version to version was amazing. It is a lesson in how editing really does make a movie. Watching these films back to back at one time, however, is something you realize you only want to do once. (One version a night over four nights would have probably worked better.) A wonderfully realized presentation for the true film scholars among us.

—Rob Freese

### MILL CREEK ENTERTAINMENT

(\$14.98 Blu-ray) 7/16

#### WILLIAM CASTLE DOUBLE FEATURE:

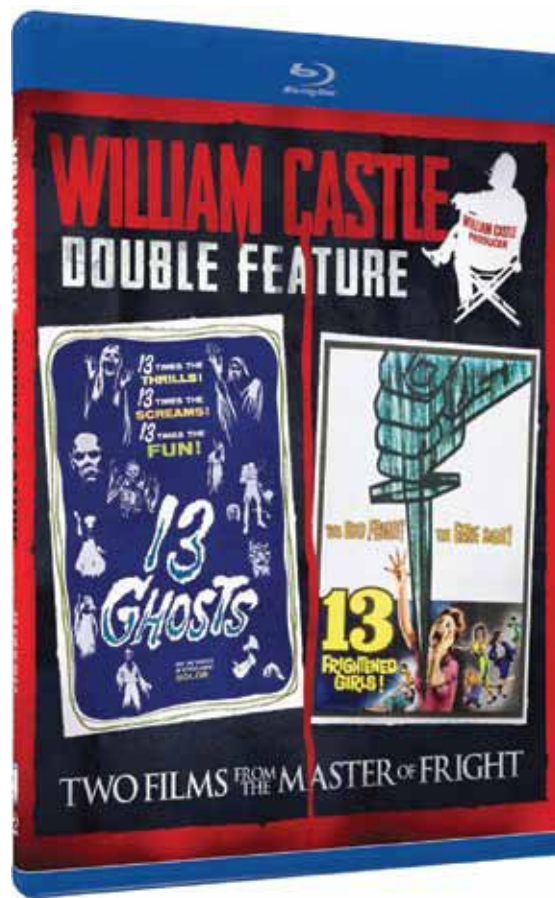
##### 13 GHOSTS (1960)B&W/Color ♂♂♂♂

D: William Castle. Charles Herbert, Jo Morrow, Martin Milner, Rosemary De Camp, Donald Woods, Margaret Hamilton. 85 mins.

##### 13 FRIGHTENED GIRLS (1963) ♂♂♂♂

D: William Castle. Murray Hamilton, Joyce Taylor, Hugh Marlowe, Khigh Dhiegh, Kathy Dunn, Charles Briggs. 88 mins.

Released on Blu-ray for the first time, one is a classic William Castle spooker, the other is a spy comedy thriller. Both have the number 13 in the title and both have actors with the last name of Hamilton. **13 Ghosts** is presented in Eastman Color and black-and-white and includes all the "Illusion-O!" effects but does not include the ghost viewers. Fortunately, I had a pair from the earlier DVD release and found, despite the box's claims that the viewers are not needed, if you want the ghosts to pop out, you need them. Or if you want to see the scenes sans ghosts using the blue filter, you definitely need them. Briefly, **13 Ghosts** is a classic shocker comedy about the Zorba family inheriting a haunted house. As Elaine, the housekeeper/medium, Margaret Hamilton is on hand at her Wicked Witch of the West best, right down to a broom, her black dress, hair in a bun, and smirk to the camera. Milner is the



lawyer for the late ghost expert Plato Zorba, who, before his death, captured 11 ghosts and set them loose throughout the house. There's also a hidden fortune. Great fun—and much better than the 2001 remake (**VS #43**). Besides having Hamilton as a "witch," the moans emitted by ghostly Uncle Plato supply another possible **Oz** connection: I'd swear that's Bert Lahr yawning after waking up from a poppy field nap in the 1939 classic.

The second feature, **13 Frightened Girls**, is in color, and, despite the title, only has one frightened girl in this espionage romp. The 16-year-old daughter (Dunn) of a diplomat becomes a spy to help the intelligence agent she has a super crush on (if you can image a pretty blonde lass having a crush on Murray Hamilton!). She sends him vital intel in the form of ransom note-style communiqués she signs as "Kitten." She even uses her white kitty cat's paw to make the paw print on the notes. Fans of **Hawaii Five-O** will enjoy the wicked performance of Wo Fat actor Khigh Dhiegh as Red Chinese diplomat Kang, who is out to perform some nasty spy shenanigans. All in all, I liked **13 Frightened Girls**. It's kind of **The Trouble with Angels** meets **The Girl From U.N.C.L.E.** Both films are recommended, but I deduct one Ro-Man for trying to get away with selling an Illusion-O! feature without the ghost viewer. Use a pair of red-and-blue 3D glasses instead or go to your crafts store and buy red-and-blue plastic sheets and make your own. So, **Ghosts** or **Girls**, you can't go wrong! ♂

—Dwight Kemper

## Rob Freese's SHARK THEATER!

### JAWS 3-D (1983) 88%

D: Joe Alves. Dennis Quaid, Bess Armstrong, Simon MacCorkindale, Louis Gossett, Jr., John Putsch, Lea Thompson. 99 mins. (Universal Studios) 6/16

The Undersea Kingdom in Florida's Sea World is thrown into a panic when a giant mechanical shark invades the lagoon area and goes on a feeding frenzy after her mechanical baby shark is captured by park officials and put on display by the park's huckster owner, Calvin Bouchard (Gossett, Jr.). Screen son of the original's Chief Brody, Mike Brody (Quaid) chain-smokes throughout the flick while attempting to help contain the shark and save people stuck in an underwater attraction. Dr. Kay Morgan (Armstrong) is a marine biologist who trains dolphins and whales and tries to keep the baby mechanical shark alive. Big-game hot-shot Philip FitzRoyce (MacCorkindale) is on hand to trap the mechanical beastie and set the scene for the utterly explosive three-dimensional climax. Okay, I'll be honest, I love this movie! I don't care how many people say how horrible they feel it is, to me this movie is magic. Yes, the Richard Matheson/Carl Gottlieb script is very reminiscent of *Gorgo* (1961). So what? You're correct, it's not nearly as scary as the original *Jaws*. And? It's got lousy effects. Bite your tongue! It was the summer of my 12th year when my family and best friends invaded the Northgate Mall Twin Cinema for what was the first 3-D movie I'd ever seen in the theater. (Earlier, we'd experienced 3-D TV with a showing of *Gorilla at Large*, but *Jaws 3-D* was an entirely different monster.) To say I was blown away by the cheesy dimensional effects does not quite describe the true joy I felt in my heart watching it in the theater. What was nice, on our way out we bumped into our next-door neighbor who came in late and was staying to watch it again from the beginning, and mom let us stay to catch it again! (Back then you could do that.) The cast is great and seems to be having fun with what is essentially a live-action comic book adventure. It was upon my most recent viewing that I noticed just how much Quaid's character was sucking down those coffin nails. It didn't seem out of the ordinary back in '83, but now, it made my eyes water. MacCorkindale is great as the lovable douchebag adventure seeker, a cross between Indiana Jones and future "Crocodile Hunter" Steve Irwin. Gossett, Jr. is equally slimy and likeable, commanding the scenes he is in and offering up the movie's best line, "We talkin' about some damn shark's *mutha*!?" It's been mentioned numerous times that Barbara



Eden is featured in the movie as "Anxious Tunnel Person," but it's not the Barbara Eden of *I Dream of Jeannie* fame. In fact, it was actually actress Barbara Quinn, who also appeared in Jeff Lieberman's *Blue Sunshine* and *Squirm*. I have no idea why her name was changed here. (If anyone knows, drop me a line.) Universal's Blu-ray is sharp and clean, but the studio pulled a fast one by not releasing the film under its proper theatrical title. It's presented only as *Jaws 3*, which is usually fine, but the sole bonus feature in addition to the theatrical trailer is a 3-D presentation of the film! Why wasn't this a big deal? I didn't even know it was part of the disc until it was already released. Universal has made no effort to let people know *Jaws 3-D* is available! Boggles the mind. The 3-D is great. I've read a lot of poor reviews on Amazon but I wonder if people need to upgrade their equipment. The 3-D version worked well on my set-up. All in all, this is probably the greatest *Jaws* rip-off ever made. Yes, *Jaws 2* was a pretty great rip-off of the original, but this one has the edge, and this time the terror is coming off the edge of the screen!

### SHARKANSAS WOMEN'S PRISON MASSACRE (2015) 81/2

D: Jim Wynorski. Dominique Swain, Traci Lords, Christine Nguyen, Cindy Lucas, John Callahan, Corey Landis, Amy Holt. 83 mins. (Scream Factory) 5/16

A fracking company manages to crack the earth's core and soon prehistoric sharks are invading the Arkansas swamplands. Down the way a bit, five buxom prison beauties have drawn jiggle duty where they have to wear embarrassingly skimpy outfits in the middle of the swamp and are directed to pretend to hit stumps with fake axes. They complain incessantly until one is eaten by a prehistoric shark. The girls and guards hightail it



out of the wetlands only to be ambushed by Honey (Swain), a psychotic redneck intent on springing her lover. She takes all of them hostage and they hide out in a cabin deep in the swamp. Meanwhile, detectives Patterson (Lords) and Adam (Landis) are searching for them and slowly realize something is not right in the swamp. When the girls make their break to escape, they learn these poorly-created CGI monster sharks can also chase them on land. Before you can say "Prehistoric land sharks?" the sharks are tunneling underground, tearing up the terrain, looking like Bugs Bunny gone mad after realizing he should have taken a left at Albuquerque. The girls escape through a cave system. Who will survive and what will be left of them? Who cares? Not nearly as fun as a couple of those *Sharknado* numbers, this silly flick premiered on Syfy, which reminds you that a disc's "unrated" status doesn't always mean it contains giant piles of gratuitous blood, gore and nudity. Nope, sometimes films are "unrated" because they were made for TV; they didn't have to be rated because they were never designed to appear in a theater. Lords is fun as an older detective, breaking in her 45-year-old-looking 29-year-old partner (Landis). The movie plays its monsters straight and did make me think. Thoughts such as: How can the sharks see while they're "swimming" through rock and dirt? Why are the women dressed like rejects from a Jess Franco prison movie? And why are all the characters so accepting that, yeah, there are prehistoric land sharks attacking us? Whatever. Scream Factory's disc includes an entertaining commentary by the director and costars Lucas and Holt, who reveal that the climactic ending of the film took place in a cave full of water moccasins. If you just have to watch every movie out there about crazy killer CGI sharks, by all means, go for it. 8



# CULT-MOVIE MILESTONES: **PHANTASM FEVER!** By Simon Drax

**WELL GO USA**  
(Blu-ray) 12/16

**PHANTASM** (1979) ♂♂♂♂

D: Don Coscarelli. A. Michael Baldwin, Reggie Bannister, Bill Thornbury, Angus Scrimm. 97 mins.

**PHANTASM II** (1988) ♂♂1/2

D: Don Coscarelli. James LeGros, Paula Irvine, Reggie Bannister, Samantha Phillips, Angus Scrimm. 97 mins.

**PHANTASM III: LORD OF THE DEAD** (1994) ♂♂♂

D: Don Coscarelli. Reggie Bannister, A. Michael Baldwin, Gloria Lynne-Henry, Bill Thornbury, Angus Scrimm. 91 mins.

**PHANTASM: OBLIVION** (1998) ♂♂♂

D: Don Coscarelli. Michael Baldwin, Reggie Bannister, Bill Thornbury, Heidi Marnhout, Angus Scrimm. 90 mins.

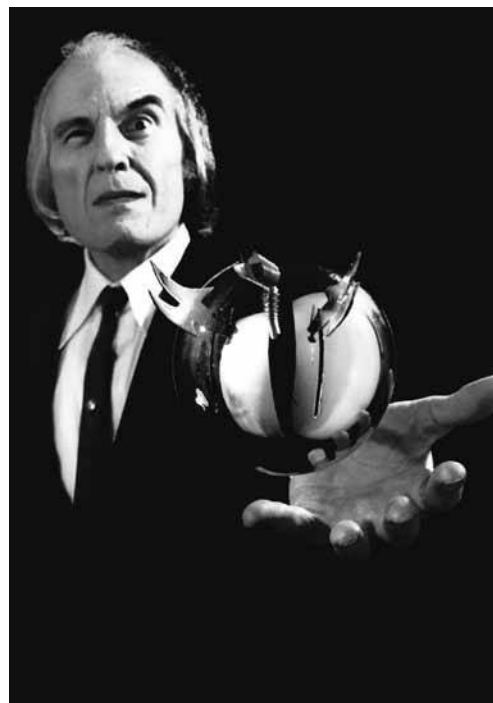
It's been, as they say, a long, strange trip. But who could have imagined a trip *so* long, *so* strange? Not Don Coscarelli, never dreaming that the outre script he penned in 1970—something would slowly transmogrify into what is arguably the most unique and original series in the horror-fantasy genre. Love it or hate it, **Phantasm** undeniably made a lasting impression on everyone who saw it in the summer of 1979. Ensnared in a small town so sleepy as to seem one big cemetery, the master of the local mortuary (Scrimm, soon to reap fame as the Tall Man) appears at first only mildly menacing, out of place. But to young Mike (Baldwin), *everything* seems menacing and out of place. He's recently lost his parents, he's worried that his beloved older brother Jody (Thornbury) will dump him with relatives, then hit the road. When Mike discovers the Tall Man is up to some serious weirdness at the mortuary, his world—and the film—takes a 90-degree turn into the skewed realm of nightmare, unleashing a torrent of blazingly innovative concepts and visuals that have never been equaled. It was this one-two punch of heartfelt emotion (Mike's love of Jody) coupled with the avalanche of heretofore unseen imagery (the silver spheres, the demon bug, the space gate) that made **Phantasm** so rare and inimitable. Backed by a haunting score and acted with enthusiastic innocence by its youthful cast, **Phantasm** attained an almost subliminal yet eternal presence in the minds of its many "phans," a presence that demanded to live again.

Yet when **Phantasm II** finally rolled into theaters nearly 10 years later, it was in many

ways everyone's worst fears made flesh. Though it boasted the money and backing of a major studio (Universal) and was technically flawless, the sequel was for the most part a tired retread, lifting whole scenes (sometimes shot-for-shot) from the first film. James LeGros might have been excellent in his own interpretation of Mike, but he didn't make anyone forget Michael Baldwin. (Perhaps cast and crew jokingly refer to LeGros as Mike's "tough guy" period.) Yet there was still something there, something unique: the mood, the mystery. Reggie Bannister emerged as the series' most lovable character. And **Phantasm II**'s first 20 minutes—Mike and Reg, on the trail of the Tall Man, finding the corpse of a small town, its cemeteries emptied, its mortuary abandoned and laced with otherworldly traps—are so effective that this sequence alone proved worth the price of admission. But as a film, as a successor to the original? Unsatisfying.

The situation improved considerably when **Phantasm III** arrived in 1994. Original actors Baldwin and Thornbury made a triumphant (and appropriately disconcerting) return to the series, marking also a return to the original's dream-like quality and strangeness while still propelled by an action-driven plot. Some new characters were added to the mix, with unavoidably mixed results. And instead of remaining a mere trans-dimensional bogeyman, the Tall Man was slowly edged into a different—even ambiguous—light, suggesting that his oft-mentioned "plans" for Mike may extend past mere death. Yes, a definite improvement...yet **Phantasm III** was still very much a *sequel*, forever suffering under the shadow of the original. Too many sequences played like rituals (or worse: *rules*) to be observed rather than spontaneous elements of a living and vibrant story; we remember the dance, we know what words to say—why doesn't it feel the same? Perhaps that's what it's all about. Perhaps trying to recapture the magic of the original **Phantasm** is as elusive as trying to recapture the past. As the summer of 1979 recedes faster and faster behind us and the dreams we once dreamt echo fainter each day, maybe these films—in their own weird way—are about the persistence of memory, memories we give names and form and voice and call "ghosts." It's getting dark, it's almost time for the fourth installment.

A moody epitaph instead of a rock'em, sock'em final chapter, **Phantasm: Oblivion** is at once a haunting farewell to long-cherished characters and a surprisingly ironic exploration of the power (and dangers) of the imagination. Kicking off with a knockout montage of the series' more impressive visuals, **P:O** begins with Reggie ("I'm good at killing dwarfs") Bannister's disillusionment with the never-ending war against the forces of evil, while longsuffering buddy Mike (Baldwin) is spirited away by the Tall Man (Scrimm, in his best performance of the series) to realms desolate and forbidding: Death Valley, transmuted into an inter-dimensional wasteland.



It's here that Mike must finally face his longtime foe, peel back the mystery of his adversary's origins, and ultimately address his own destiny. "Be careful what you wish for," the Tall Man cautions. "You just might find it." With **Phantasm: Oblivion**, Coscarelli abandons all attempts at fashioning a franchise installment, producing instead what's been described as a "love letter to the phans." It's a ballsy move, but not one without risks and **P:O** is not without the consequent problems endemic to such a move, not the least being that it's a film so umbilically linked to the prior flicks that it can't possibly stand on its own—a shaky strategy for any movie, cult or otherwise. Also troubling is the inclusion of some truly pointless action scenes, the worst involving Reggie and a "demon trooper." And though Coscarelli is to be applauded for throwing the **Phantasm** sequel model out the window, one can only wonder at the series staples he chooses to retain: the exploding car, for example (three of them, a new record), or the useless dwarfs (who've never looked worse), or the sexy babe we finally *just can't trust* (yeah, we've come full circle all right). It's enough to make me wish for a good old hearse-Hemicuda chase scene! But these seemingly persnickety complaints issue from a longtime phan who knows the series perhaps a little *too* well; I have an opinion on every frame of this freaking movie. Another phan will find 60 other things to complain—or rave—about. In the final analysis it's important to realize that **Phantasm: Oblivion** was made with considerable love for both the characters and the material, and that the film's positive elements far outweigh the negative. Longtime phans will delight in the countless secrets revealed and marvel at how effectively—and movingly—the unseen footage from the original **Phantasm** is interwoven throughout. The trip is worth taking. I look forward to embarking on the next voyage, the long-delayed **Phantasm: Ravager**. ♂

# Filmmakers in Focus: DON COSCARELLI: *PHANTASM* As Told To Simon Drax

In a major move for **Phantasm** phans, in July '16 Well Go USA announced an all-new 4K restoration of Don Coscarelli's original 1979 cult classic. **Phantasm: Remastered** was slated to screen across the country as part of the debut of Art House Theater Day on 9/24. The series' long-anticipated fifth installment, **Phantasm: Ravager**, was set to receive select 10/7 theatrical playdates to coincide with the film's HD release across cable and digital platforms.

Filmmaker/phan J.J. Abrams initiated the **Phantasm: Remastered** project when he discovered he could no longer locate mint prints of that influential fright film. Abrams invited **Phantasm** creator Coscarelli to participate in overseeing a meticulous restoration that includes a new 5.1 audio mix. **Phantasm: Ravager**, written by Coscarelli and David Hartman, directed by Hartman, and completed in 2014, reteams original stars A. Michael Baldwin and Reggie Bannister in a final battle against late, great Tall Man Angus Scrimm in his filmic farewell. Bill (Jody) Thornbury and character king Daniel Roebuck are likewise along for the violent ride.

Well Go USA plans to follow up with a lavish Blu-ray set assembling **Phantasm: Remastered**, **Phantasm: Ravager**, along with restored editions of the earlier sequels **Phantasm III: Lord of the Dead** and **Phantasm IV: Oblivion**, all complemented by copious bonus material. Stay tuned!

Meantime, the following is excerpted from Simon Drax's original *'Scope* chat with Don Coscarelli in 1998.

**SIMON DRAX** When I was a kid, I spent a lot of time hanging out in cemeteries, thinking that there was some dark secret to the process of death and burial, you know, very morbid stuff. Then *Phantasm* came along and seemed to codify all those associations—dreams, secrets, death. It blew my mind. I've run into a lot of people who had the same experience. Do you ever get tired of "phans" coming up to you now and saying that you blew their minds when they were 14?

**DON COSCARELLI** No, I don't get tired of it at all! It's all very thrilling to me because it puts me in touch with my youth. I wrote that script when I was 22 years old, so I wasn't as far removed from my youth as I am now. Now it looks like ancient history! But the point is, I feel there was a connection with

young male phans and Michael Baldwin. The bond phans feel with Michael Baldwin as an actor, and the character of Mike—you know, in terms of a young kid, on his own, trying to come to grips with death, the loss of his brother. It's very flattering. It makes me feel that the movie really worked on that level.

**SD** There's definitely a strong connection with Mike. The first time Michael Baldwin screams "Stop the car!" in *Phantasm III*, it was like, oh yeah, that's the kid I used to know. We hadn't seen him in that role for 14 years. It was eerie.

**DC** And *Phantasm IV* also harkens back to the original *Phantasm* in a lot of ways. We've actually included some footage from the first film that no one's ever seen.

**SD** The unseen footage had real resonance. Very powerful.

**DC** I appreciate that. It's not often that a series is filmed over a twenty-year period, to have an actor who's both 13 and 33 in the same movie. *Phantasm IV* is pretty unique in that respect.

**SD** But that's just one aspect of what *Phantasm IV* has to offer, isn't it?

**DC** Yes, absolutely. There's no question that this movie also deals in answering some core questions of the series—questions we've previously never really attempted to address.

**SD** At one point, the Tall Man (Scrimm) is talking to Mike about escaping the boundaries of time and space, the flesh. Do you want to elaborate on this? Is the Tall Man "evil"?

**DC** He's the embodiment of evil, at least in *our* world. But we make glancing references to the Tall Man having an over-arching plan, which is where some of that commentary comes from. But there's no question that from the beginning all the way to the end we've always had the Tall Man very evil, especially in his relationship with Mike.

**SD** I've always wondered about the acknowledgements to cinematographer Daryn Okada in *III*'s end credits.

**DC** We had some real problems during the filming of *Phantasm III*, and Daryn came out and shot some sphere effects for us. He's a real collaborator; he worked as a grip during *Phantasm*, then he was director of photography on *Phantasm II*. I wish I could afford him for other things.

**SD** If you had an unlimited budget—say, \$200 million—would *Phantasm IV* have been a very different film?



**DC** I think by nature, absolutely. We'd have a much larger scope, and we'd have much more state-of-the-art digital effects, yeah. We had a plan to do a big-budget project, *Phantasm 1999*, but it was a little too large in scope, I think, for this genre. Unfortunately, we weren't able to get it financed.

**SD** And this was the treatment by Roger (Pulp Fiction) Avary?

**DC** Yes, it was. Roger wrote a very wonderful screenplay, very large, almost epic in scale. And it stayed true to the *Phantasm* world. And it was a little frustrating because we weren't able to get it put together.

**SD** So what was your budget for *Phantasm IV*?

**DC** Well, *IV* was modest, about the same as *III*, which was sort of in the mid-ones and twos.

**SD** You own the rights to the music?

**DC** Yeah. People love the music from the first movie so much. Some people don't like the "high-tech" nature of parts *II* and *III*.

**SD** What do you think of the current state of fantasy and horror films?

**DC** There's always some good stuff, you know; it ebbs and flows. But the period when we released *Phantasm* in the summer of 1979: *Alien*. *Dawn of the Dead*. It really was a golden period. It was really exciting to be part of that. ☿



# MONDO ITALO!

By Rob Freese

## ARROW VIDEO

(\$39.95 2-disc Blu-ray + DVD) 7/16

**BLOOD AND BLACK LACE** (1964)

~~~~~

D: Mario Bava. Cameron Mitchell, Eva Bartok, Thomas Reiner, Ariana Gorini, Dante DiPaolo, Luciano Pigozzi. 88 mins.

At Countess Christina Como's (Bartok) fashion house, the pretty young models are being stalked by a dark-clad figure whose identity is kept hidden behind a mask and within the shadows. Isabella (France Ungaro) is the first to die by the hand of the maniac during a storm. When Nicole (Gorini) finds Isabella's diary, everyone is suspicious of what might be in it. The diary proves to supply sufficient motive for our stalker to trap Nicole and kill her with a spiked glove. Max Marian (Mitchell) is high on the police inspector's list of suspects, but all the suspects are let loose from custody after another murder occurs. As the winding plot of this superior thriller works its way to its finale, numerous models die in horrible fashion and the dark murderer's motives are revealed. To say more is to risk spoiling the surprises Maestro Bava has in store for you. He plays on your nerves with fine precision, creating a tight thriller with plenty of genuine shocks. The violent murders are quite disturbing and still retain their ability to jolt viewers who think they've seen it all. It's also interesting to note that the police inspectors prove to be rather inept in figuring out the mystery, so you never feel like they are ever protecting anyone from danger. While most scholars go to his 1963 thriller **The Evil Eye/The Girl Who Knew Too Much** (VS #63) as the start of the giallo cycle, I think **Blood and Black Lace** exemplifies what the perfect giallo can deliver. It blends sex and violence in a way that set the standard for how the Italian thrillers would be made for the next couple of decades. And it did it without being gratuitously sleazy, even if we are presented with pathetic hop-heads looking for smack, blackmailing bimbos and murderous whack-a-doos. The film is also a triumph of technical skill and style, as Bava's camera prowls like a silent cat among all the characters' storylines. The color scheme and lighting throughout are nothing short of scrumptious. The film is a delight for the eyes, and it's easy to see where Dario Argento got his inspiration for his giallo offerings. All around, the cast is wonderful, especially Mitchell and Bartok, who basically plays house mother to the models. Arrow rocks its 2K HD presentation with a cornucopia of extras that include new subtitles for the Italian-language track, a new commentary by Tim Lucas, the giallo docu-

mentary **Psycho Analysis**, the visual essay **Gender & Giallo**, two episodes of David Del Valle's **The Sinister Image** TV show featuring an interview with Cameron Mitchell, the alternate U.S. opening, trailer and plenty more. This is a beautiful presentation of one of the genre's most important contributions. You can't consider yourself either a fan of Bava or giallos until you've survived **Blood and Black Lace**!

## BLUE UNDERGROUND

(\$39.98 3-disc Blu-ray Limited Edition)

10/16

**MANHATTAN BABY** (1982)~~~~~

D: Lucio Fulci. Christopher Connelly, Laura Lenzi, Brigitta Boccoli, Giovanni Frezza, Cinzia de Ponti, Cosimo Cinieri. 89 mins.

Archeologist Connelly's daughter is given an accursed amulet that awakens an ancient demon and also allows the girl to travel to an alternate reality. When the demon attempts to take over the little girl's body, an exorcist is called in to do some soul-saving. Scripter Dardano Sacchetti uses themes from **The Exorcist**, **The Omen** and **The Awakening** to help fashion this off-kilter demonic-possession story. The flick includes only limited gore but does boast a couple of cool **Beyon-**desque desolate landscapes where unfortunate souls are cast away. (**Manhattan Baby**'s one standout scene involves a chap who is attacked and gored by a flock of reanimated stuffed birds.) The child actors are quite good, but some of the optical effects are extremely cheesy. **Manhattan Baby** is far from Fulci's best but is worth a look for the fright maestro's fans, especially in Blue Underground's gala 3-disc Limited Edition. Among the copious extras are an hour-long interview with composer Fabio Frizzi, **For the Birds** (an interview with costar Cosimo Cinieri), **20 Years with Fulci** (interview with makeup effects artist Maurizio Trani), **Beyond the Living Dead** (interview with co-writer Sacchetti), Stephen Thrower on **Manhattan Baby** (interview with the author of **Beyond Terror: The Films of Lucio Fulci**), **Manhattan Baby Suite** (a live studio performance by Fabio Frizzi), theatrical trailer, poster & still gallery, collectible booklet, and a bonus CD of Frizzi's Original Motion Picture Soundtrack.

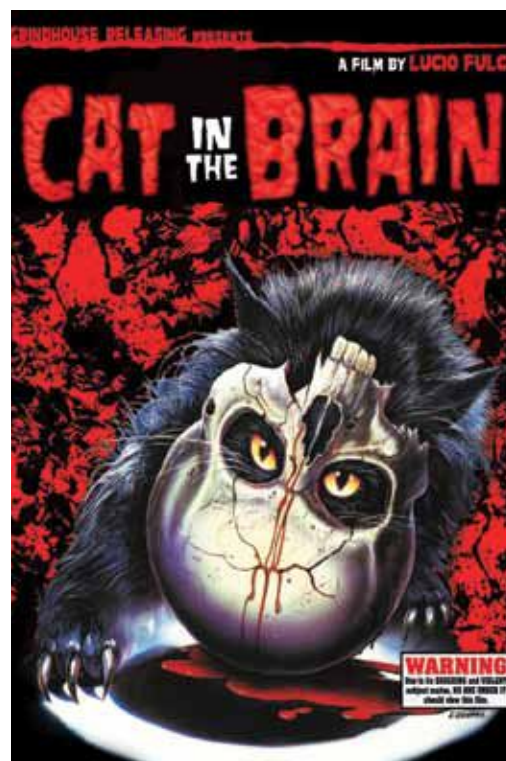
## GRINDHOUSE RELEASING

(\$39.95 3-disc Blu-ray + CD) 7/16

**CAT IN THE BRAIN** (1990)~~~~~

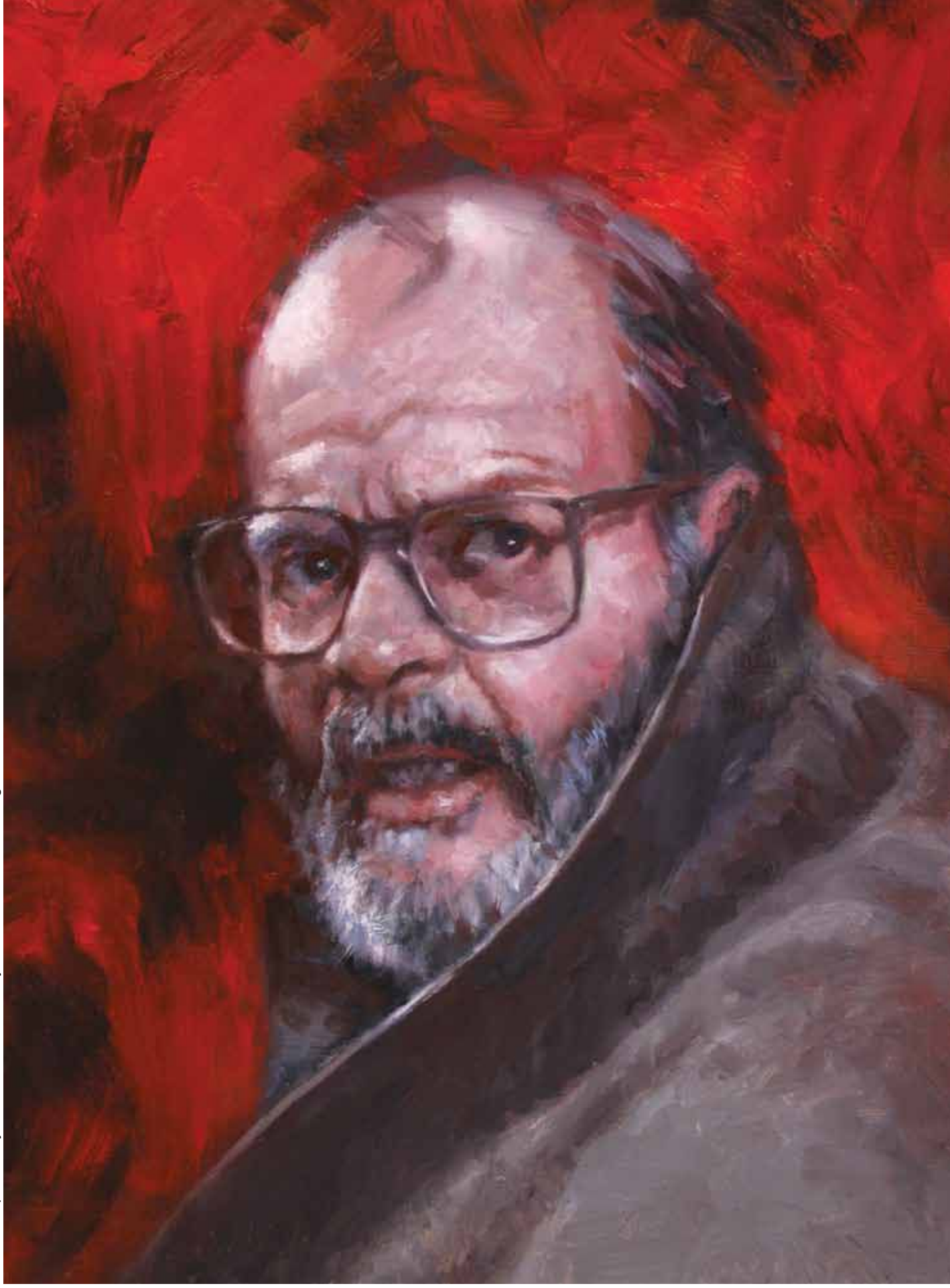
D: Lucio Fulci. Lucio Fulci, David L. Thompson, Malisa Longo, Shillelt Angel, Brett Halsey. 95 mins.

Director Fulci divides his time between behind-the-camera directing duties and acting chores for this hallucinogenic nightmare journey. Fulci portrays an exaggerated version of himself: Dr. Lucio Fulci, a famous horror-movie director who fears his brain is warping after years of filming celluloid terrors. When the nightmares and hallucinations become too overwhelming, he visits



Professor Egon Schwartz (Thompson), a deranged shrink who convinces Fulci to partake in clinical hypnosis. Soon, the nightmares prove to be all too convincing and people around the gore maestro begin dying for real. Fulci searches for the truth, determined to find the real killer or discover the killer inside his own mind. Gore moments include cadaver chainsawing, kid snuffing, decapitation, strangulation, microwave meltdown, noggin bashing, gut stabbing and, of course, a crazed kitty gnashing on Fulci's brain. This insane flick was released in a terrific double disc DVD in 2009 and now comes out in a lavish 3-disc Blu-ray set that includes a remastered HD version of the flick, a disc full of extras and the original soundtrack CD. The uncensored director's cut is accompanied by copious extras, including interviews with Fulci and the "sorta" star, Brett Halsey (who appears only in scenes taken from Fulci's **When Alice Broke the Looking Glass**, aka **Touch of Death**), trailers, still galleries, a plethora of new interviews including screenwriter Antonio Tentori, cinematographer Sandro Grossi, composer Fabio Frizzi and poster artist Enzo Sciotti, plus a snippet from Frizzi's 2015 North America tour, memories of Lucio, new liner notes, remembrances from daughter Antonella Fulci and much more. The first printing includes a glow-in-the-dark slipcase and mini portrait of our beloved maestro. For fans on the fence as to whether or not they should upgrade their DVDs, if you want every last tidbit of information on this flick, you will not find more than on this glorious release, produced with great affection and respect by the true exploitation archivists at Grindhouse Releasing. (To further fan your Fulci Fever, seek out Chas Balun's lovingly written 1996 fanboy tribute, **Lucio Fulci: Beyond the Gates**, published by Fantasma Books and still available via Amazon.~~~~~

Lucio Fulci portrait by Dave Lebow, courtesy of Grindhouse Releasing





## The Phantom's '70s SHOCKERS!

KINO LORBER

(\$29.95 Blu-ray) 8/16

### WHOEVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO?

(1971) 8881/2

D: Curtis Harrington. Shelley Winters, Mark Lester, Chloe Franks, Ralph Richardson, Lionel Jeffries, Hugh Griffith, Judy Cornwell, Michael Gothard. 92 mins.

Harrington (*Night Tide*, *Planet of Blood*) meets Hammer in a slyly unsettling Hansel and Gretel variation originally released by AIP. Winters is wonderfully unglued as nut-zoid Auntie Roo, a former American show-girl who, we learn in a chilling prologue, keeps the decomposed body of her late daughter in a locked playroom in her "Gingerbread House" in rural 1920s England. Roo also "communicates" with the spirit of said dead daughter with the dubious help of shifty con artist clairvoyant Mr. Benton (a topflight Richardson) and her own untrustworthy servants Albie (Gothard) and Clarine (Cornwell). Each year, the kindly if crazy Roo invites 10 children selected from a local orphanage for an elaborate sleepover Christmas party. This particular annum she likewise welcomes two stowaways, brother and sister act Christopher (Lester) and Katy (Franks), the latter a near dead ringer for her own deceased child. The wary Christopher quickly discerns Auntie Roo's dark side, but too late to prevent Katy from becoming the mad matron's prisoner. With a droll tone established both by Harrington's deft direction and a tight script co-written by veteran Hammer scribe Jimmy Sangster, impeccable period décor and legit shock value, *Auntie Roo* is a winner from opening to fadeout.

SCREAM FACTORY

(\$29.95 each Blu-ray) 7/16

### BAD MOON (1996) 888

D: Eric Red. Mariel Hemingway, Michael Pare, Mason Gamble, Ken Pogue, Hrothgar Mathews, Johanna Marlowe Lebovitz, Primo. 80 mins.

Onetime Kathryn Bigelow collaborator Eric Red—whose earlier genre work includes such worthy titles as *The Hitcher*, *Near Dark*, *Cohen & Tate* and *Undertow*—helms a surprisingly static, extremely uneventful outing here. Adapted by Red from the Wayne Smith novel *Thor*, *Bad Moon* opens with explorer Ted (Pare) and squeeze Marjorie (Lebovitz) being attacked by a jungle werewolf; Marjorie buys it at once, while Ted survives with a wound that earns him a one-way ticket to Werewolfville. Back in

relative civilization (the Pacific Northwest, with British Columbia performing scenic stunt-double duties), Ted accepts lawyer/sis Janet's (Hemingway) invitation to park his Airstream in her spacious backyard. The story's real hero, Janet's son Brett's (Gamble) pet pooch Thor (Primo, in the pic's most charismatic perf), engages in repetitious cat-and-mouse (or, more accurately, dog-and-wolf) intrigues with the lupine Ted (who, in Red's variation on traditional cinematic lycanthrope lore, needs only a partial moon to make the switch). Not much happens within this basic situation; what little plot exists is poked along by Ted conveniently leaving his werewolf diary around where Janet can read it. FX ace Steve Johnson handles makeup chores with mostly routine results, while the transformation scene from 1935's *Werewolf of London* is seen on an onscreen TV. Original rights-holder Warner Bros. accorded this modest venture a wide national theatrical release, with predictably dire b.o. results. *Scream Factory* augments its Blu-ray edition with a bonus version, an Eric Red-approved Director's Cut, so interested parties can view and compare. Other extras include a Director's Cut commentary by Red, interviews with Red, Johnson, actors Pare and Gamble, and stunt coordinator Ken Kirzinger, trailer, and storyboards.

### THE BOY WHO CRIED WEREWOLF

(1973) 888

D: Nathan Juran. Kerwin Matthews, Scott Sealey, Elaine Devry, Robert J. Wilke, Susan Foster, Bob Homel. 93 mins.

A fun throwback to '50s fright filmdom with a light '70s overlay, *The Boy Who Cried Werewolf* updates the old cautionary fairy tale referred to in the title. When young Richie Bridgestone (a very believable Sealey) witnesses a werewolf roaming the woods, no one believes him. When Richie's divorced dad Robert (Matthews) is bitten during a battle with the man-beast that ends in the latter's death by impalement, the boy's claim is still dismissed as Robert insists the unfortunate attacker was of human origin. Natch, it's not long before pop is likewise howling the old lycanthrope blues and claiming victims, much to the local sheriff's chagrin (western veteran Wilke, of *The Magnificent Seven* fame). The '70s are represented by a band of hippie Jesus freaks headed by bearded huckster Brother Christopher (played by Homel, who also wrote the script). *Boy* follows a predictable but slickly executed trajectory and features old-school (even for 1973) time-lapse transformations and a '50s-style werewolf makeup. Long elusive on home-vid, *Boy* finally finds a welcome haven on *Scream Factory's* quality Blu-ray. Unlike *Bad Moon*, *Boy* arrives sans extras.



### HELLHOLE (1985) 888

D: Pierre de Moro. Judy Landers, Ray Sharkey, Mary Woronov, Marjoe Gortner, Edy Williams, Terry Moore. 95 mins.

It's apparent from the outset that all is not well at Ashland's all-femme sanitarium. Dr. Dane (Marjoe) is in the basement mixing up his new chemical-lobotomy formula. Lesbian necrophiliac hospital head Dr. Fletcher (Woronov) keeps the doc's hopelessly deranged "rejects" caged under the boiler room, the hellhole of the title. A greasy mad strangler named Silk (hammily portrayed by the late Sharkey) infiltrates the asylum by posing as a leering, gutter-mouthed aide. As Silk's intended prey, large-breasted amnesia victim Landers, perceptively remarks, "This is crazy!" Crazy, yes; fun, not so much. Despite the pic's perverse premise (further abetted by sandbox catfights, a lesbian shower-room brawl, and mudbaths designed to "cure nymphomania"), *Hellhole* won't give Sam Fuller's *Shock Corridor* (VS #78) any sleepless nights. *Scream's* Blu-ray edition includes a new interview with Mary Woronov and the original theatrical trailer.

—The Phantom

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**BACK ON THE  
BASKET CASE:  
CULT STAR KEVIN  
VANHENTENRYCK!**  
*As Told To  
Terry & Tiffany DuFoe*

An accomplished artist, musician and actor, Kevin VanHentenryck is best known as the iconic star of Frank Henenlotter's cult trilogy **Basket Case**, **Basket Case 2** and **Basket Case 3: The Progeny**, the latter two titles now out in extras-enhanced special edition Blu-rays from Synapse Films. As Duane Bradley, Kevin plays human brother to his psychic twin, feisty mutant Belial, inhabitant of the infamous titular basket. Our dynamic dad and daughter team, Terry & Tiffany DuFoe, recently spoke with the talented multi-hyphenate.

**TERRY DUFOE** *Do people still recognize you from the **Basket Case** films?*

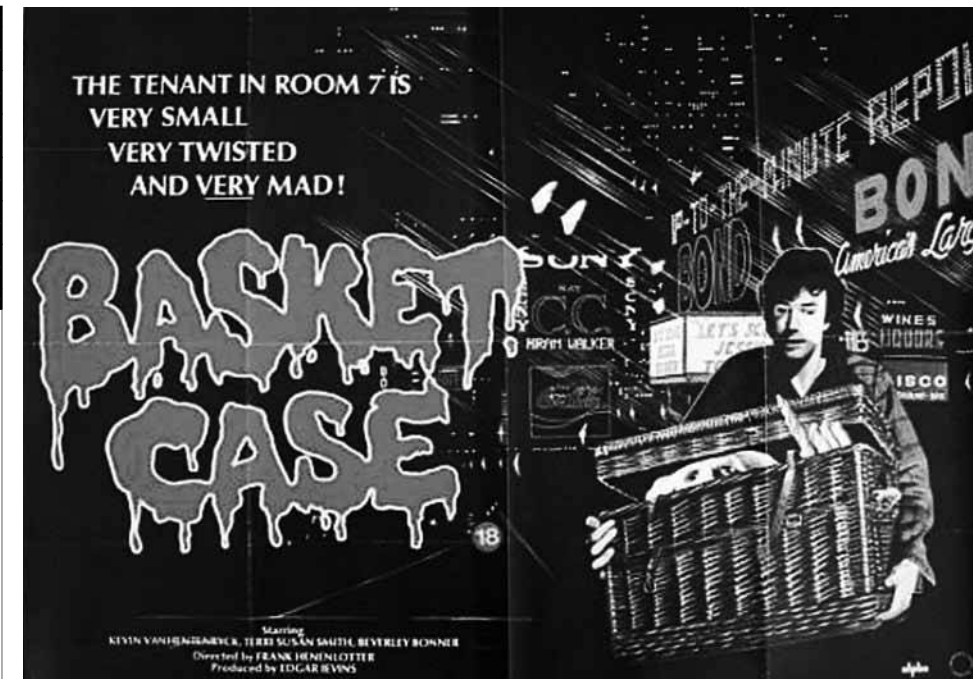
**KEVIN VANHENTENRYCK** Occasionally. I do a small number of conventions every year and, you know, people recognize me at the cons when I advertise. But I live in a very rural area and it's not a big deal here.

**TD** *Have you always been one that was into sculpting as well as acting?*

**KV** Yeah, that has been pretty much a constant. In school, the only things that captured my interest was the artistic stuff. Music. Acting. All that.

**TD** *We saw **What's in the Basket?** It is a great documentary and I believe they said that when Frank Henenlotter cast you for the film you were working with another acting troupe? I understand that organization recommended you to Henenlotter?*

**KV** Ilze [Balodis], who plays the social worker with the glasses in **Basket Case**. She was the assistant registrar at the school that I was going to, which was the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City. Ruth Neuman, who plays our aunt, was the registrar. So, Ilze said to me one day, "I know this guy that makes films. You should meet him." I said, "Okay." So we went downtown and met Frank, hung out a little bit and talked about film and stuff. He showed us some stuff. He hired me to do several background parts, extra parts, in a prior film to **Basket Case** called **Slash of the Knife**. That is something he has always been adamant about not releasing. Anyways, I was on his case about using student actors instead of friends and acquaintances because he would get better results. He apparently liked



the results he was getting because not that long after that he called me up and told me he had a new idea for a film. He told me the plot of the film and asked me if I was interested. I said, "I'm there, I'm there! Sign me up."

**TD** *When you were told the crazy storyline for **Basket Case**, what went on in your head?*

**KV** Well, you know, Duane doesn't think he's crazy! For Duane, everything that is going on in his universe is perfectly normal and reasonable. So, the trick is to find a way into the character and release it. The idea that these two are telepathically linked, this is like an actor's dream come true!

**TD** *There are a lot of taboos that are addressed in **Basket Case**. Were you ever concerned that maybe Frank had gone too far?*

**KV** I never thought so, no. I'll give you a really good example of this. The original script calls for Belial to be running through the streets of the city in that dream sequence. But once the logistics of the film were knocked out and a budget was established, someone realized we weren't going to be able to do that. So, Frank was working on this and he came up with this idea of me running through the streets. It was not my favorite thing to do. We did it in February and it was the coldest night of the year. But as soon as he described it, I realized, yeah, we really have to do this. I didn't think it was over the top at all. I thought it was very logical, and powerful.

**TD** *Did you have any apprehensions about running in the cold in the nude?*

**KV** Well, my biggest fear was running over broken glass, to tell you the truth. We did this in my old neighborhood, Tribeca, which in those days was this abandoned derelict neighborhood. There

was nothing going on down there. A few of us artists had kind of camped out in these old factory buildings and that was it. So, there wasn't a lot of presence of anyone; you know, people on the streets, or cars, or police, or anything! I didn't worry that much about it. We had a heated car at each end. We had people watching the streets. It was just really cold for a few minutes, that's all!

**TD** *Did Frank have a permit for that scene?*

**KV** Oh no. Not for the Statue of Liberty scene either. On the ferry over, he said, "Now, if we don't use a tripod, it's not an official thing, but if anybody asks, it's a student film! We're going to do one take and run, so make it good!"

**TD** *We wanted to ask you about Belial himself. Was there ever a concern that trying to create and animate this creature on screen would not exactly work for the film? You didn't have CGI at the time. It was all practical effects.*

**KV** Yeah, exactly! In the first film, his eyes were supposed to light up. I think Frank says they worked twice and then they kind of burned out. A little puff of smoke came out of his butt and that was it. And there's one scene where you can see a seam on Belial. And they had a lot of trouble with the gloves because they were small. Only Frank could fit in them. You know, that kind of thing. But as far as making it real, there's really no difference between Ben Affleck not really being Batman. It's the character. They're doing a lot of this comic book stuff now and, you know, you're always playing a part. It's not real, ever, whether it's a realistic film or a fantasy or whatever. The actor's job is very similar, whether you're working with other actors, superheroes or a wicker basket.

**TD** *Belial is an extension of your character. You play Belial in a scene with Terri Susan Smith?*



**“The actor's job is very similar, whether you're working with other actors, superheroes or a wicker basket.”**

**Kevin VanHentenryck**

KV No, not in the first film. But in both the second and the third film I do wear the Belial hat and I got to play him for a bit, yes.

TD When you say “hat,” what do you mean?

KV The effect was kind of a combination between a hat and maybe a football player's shoulder pads. It was a kind of thing that you wore over your head and shoulders and my face would show through.

TD How hard was it to do that?

KV The effects are always a little tedious because it's a slow process to apply them, but that stuff is great. I love that! That's my primary thing, if I can get **Case 4** off the ground. I want to play Belial and make Belial a real character instead of this little rabid, rubber thing.

TD I mentioned Terri Susan Smith. Am I right in saying that she was a punk rock singer?

KV That's right. She was in a band, I think at that time it was called Theresa Cake. There was also a band that she was in called Garbage, around the same time, and she was bald. That's why she wore a wig in the film.

TD I've heard you tell fans that Belial is a part of all of us. Can you elaborate on that?

KV Well, we all have a dark half. For some of us, it shows a little more than it does with others. But the Bradley brothers are a literal manifestation of both the positive and negative that is in all of us. We all carry around some baggage. The expression is, “Anyone without baggage simply hasn't traveled.” We all have this in our nature and I think this is one of the reasons that the film really reaches people. They're dealing with the same kind of issues that we all have, just made more plain and more graphic.

TD A great thing about **Basket Case** is that it was centered in New York City and Times Square, as gritty as it was and so very different than what we see when we go to New York now. The film really captured the grit, the grime, and the sleaze, if you will. Even Frank has said that he just wanted to make a movie that would play in that area. Do you feel that the **Basket Case** sequels really had the same power that the first one did? Which of the films do you like or don't like?



KV My favorite is still the first one because of the way we made it. It was much more of an ensemble piece because there was no money. We would work on Saturdays and Ilze would make lunch. If there was no money for lunch or film for the afternoon, we would only work in the morning. You know, that kind of thing. Or [producer] Edgar [Ievins] would say, “Oh man, we've got to find a toilet.” So, we would climb into this van and drive around the East Village until we found a toilet on the street, bring it back to the set and put it in. The set, by the way, was one room and a hallway. So, if you look closely, Casey's room with all the smiley faces is the same room that Duane and Belial are in. It's just redecorated!

TD Going back to **Slash of the Knife** for a moment, it has still never been released. Have you ever seen a full version of the film and exactly what are Henenlotter fans missing?

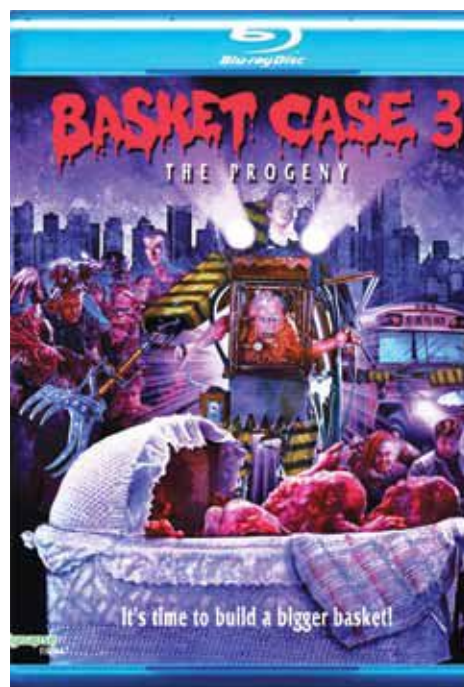
KV I liked it, personally. I've never really talked to Frank at length about what his objections to it were. It's in the style of **Reefer Madness** or the help films of the 1950s. It's a film about circumcision, and somebody who is not (circumcised) and how it drives them mad, essentially.

TD Frank is really good at making viewers feel uncomfortable!

KV He does have a special genius for that, doesn't he?

TD You got to do a kind of tongue-in-cheek cameo playing “the Man with the Basket” in **Brain Damage**.

KV That was incredible. I had short hair at the time, so that's a wig too. For that one, we did have a permit. We had access to a New York City subway car for one hour and I think we did



something like 32 or 34 set-ups in an hour. It was mad and we were just racing through it. “Now go here and do this and then go here...” It was just incredible, but we pulled it off and I think it looks really good. Like you were saying about the Times Square thing, even the subways of that era have that vibe to it, you know? And that is in fact all gone now.

TD Knowing that Frank Henenlotter is a real stock company guy like John Waters who uses the same actors, how come you weren't in films like **Bad Biology**?

KV Oh man, that's a Frank question. I don't know. Frank works with characters. See, I'm a trained actor but a lot of directors aren't trained in “classical theater” as you say, and Frank's eye particularly is about character much more than acting. He's a genius for characters. I think perhaps he felt Duane was strong enough a character that he doesn't want to risk another film by inserting Duane into it.

TD I was going to ask why you didn't at least have a cameo in **Frankenhooker**, but I realized that **Frankenhooker** was filmed in tandem with **Basket Case 2**. Is it correct that you guys were filming them at the same time?

KV They did two back to back: **Frankenhooker** and **Basket Case 2**. It was a package deal from the producers. They had rented one of the studios by the old piers. Again, in those days, the neighborhood was abandoned down there near the UPS Depot. They used a lot of the same set-ups and Gabe [Bartalos] was certainly using the same facilities for both films. Gabe had a lot of effects to do for both films. They were nuts! Think of it! They had all those body parts for **Frankenhooker** and then all the freaks for **Basket Case 2**. These guys were insane to even try this.

**“They had all those body parts for *Frankenhooker* and then all the freaks for *Basket Case 2*.”**  
**Kevin VanHentenryck**

*TD* Were you surprised when Henenlotter came to you with **Basket Case 2**? The original **Basket Case** came out in 1982 and they didn't go forward with the sequel until 1990. Do you know how the demand for the sequel materialized almost a decade later?

*KV* Yeah, Frank tells this story. For years, people wanted him to make **Basket Case 2** and it was always “Oh, there's a fourth doctor or a third twin.” You know, just all this kind of silly stuff. He didn't want to rehash it just for the sake of rehashing it. He had worked out something with Jim Glickenhaus regarding the **Frankenhooker** project and he loved it. Jim said, “What else do you got?” At this point Frank had just gone through this whole emotional telling of the **Frankenhooker** story like he had done with me with the first film and he didn't know what else to say. So he just kind of blurted out, “Well, we could do **Basket Case 2**!” And that was it!

*TD* I know you are good friends with legendary singer Annie Ross. Before you got to know her, when you found out about **Basket Case 2** and **Basket Case 3**, did you have any apprehensions that the spotlight was a little off you?

*KV* My job is to do for Frank, to the best of my abilities, what he wants. I loved working with Annie Ross. She's a really cool lady. I thought she was excellent in the part. Frank always says that he didn't even have to direct her. He just said, “Just go for it and we'll follow you around with a camera.” Again, it's a different type of film. Whereas the first one was more about the brothers, the second and third are more ensemble pieces, which just does change the focus a little bit. I never really minded that that much, though.

*TD* I have heard there are rumors of a new **Basket Case** film in the works?

*KV* I've been working on a script for a **Case 4**. It's not another **Basket Case** film, though. It's more like a “Let's revisit the Bradley brothers now” all these years later. But, don't forget, there's 11 baby Belials who are now in their late teens and all hell is about to break loose! I'm trying to write it in the best possible way I can, simply presuming that once it is at the right point, something will show up and we'll be able to make it. I have no idea how it will work out, though.

*TD* Before we talk about your sculpting work, I wanted to mention that you had family in show business.

*KV* Yes! My mother's brother and his wife were both in the theater in the late 1940s through the 1960s, I suppose. His name was Whitfield Connor. He was in a film called **Tap Roots**. He did a lot of **GE Theater**. Her name was Haila Stoddard and she was on **The Secret Storm** for I think like 30 years. Both of them were very, very cool people. Interestingly enough, when he was in high school, Whit played the lead in **Death Takes a Holiday**. And when I was in high school, I did the same thing. So early on I felt kind of like, “This is a little too much!”

*TD* One of the things I'd like for you to talk about is your Rip Van Winkle sculpture.

*KV* The Rip Van Winkle is at the summit of Hunter Mountain in the mountaintop region of the Catskill Mountains in New York. It's two and a half hours north of Manhattan. David Slutzky, who is one of the owners of Hunter Mountain, and I are good friends and I would see him around at various gallery openings and so on. He's an artist himself in several mediums. He said to me a couple of times, “We should do a Rip Van Winkle at the mountain.” I thought he was just being polite initially. After he said it a couple of times, I finally called his bluff and it turned out he was serious.

*TD* You've been working with blocks of stone and now you get to do a mountain?

*KV* Well, the first step was to spend an afternoon driving around the mountain and looking at exposed cliff faces. The problem is, when they build these ski lifts, they are drilling and using dynamite. So all of the exposed cliffs were either too badly worn or had been dynamited into oblivion and it would've required too much effort to dig down beyond that to get to some clean, fresh stone. We ended up bringing in an 8-ton block of blue stone from another quarry just so we had a decent stone face to work with without this major construction having to happen.

*TD* Now I've heard writers and even directors talk about a project taking a long time and they refer to a long time being anywhere from 1-5 years. But your Rip Van Winkle project took you how many years?

*KV* It was 14 years.

*TD* Have you ever sculpted Belial?

*KV* I did actually do a Belial in Vermont marble years and years ago. This was in the 1980s. It's not a life-like. It's kind of a stylized piece. I've always wanted to do another one but Gabe Bartalos does it so much better.

*TD* Are you working on any big projects now?



Say Hello to His Little Friend: Kevin and stone Belial.

*KV* Yes, I have a couple of big projects going on right now. Every year I present a free stone-carving class on the mountaintop called the Hunter Stone Carving Seminar. 2016 was our 10<sup>th</sup> year.

*TD* Talking about upcoming projects, there was something listed on IMDB called **The Krokodil Chronicles** that you are listed as being a part of?

*KV* **The Krokodil Chronicles**! Cameron Scott is the director. I'm slated to play a sleazy gangster type in that.

*TD* You also had a very fun role in the 2013 film **Dry Bones** from Greg Lamberson, who brought us **Slime City**. What was it like working on that?

*KV* That was fun! That was a great shoot. He's a cool guy and that's a really cool story, by the way, and Debbie Rochon is in it! That was fun to do. Unfortunately, I didn't have any scenes with Debbie in that, but I have met her a bunch of times. I did a small part in one of Kamal Admed's films called **Rapturiosis** and Debbie's in that as well. I got to hang out with her more on that shoot even though we didn't have scenes together in that one either.

*TD* The one question that I'm sure you get over and over at conventions is “What's in the basket?” What do you say to fans at conventions?

*KV* Well, I was at a film convention in Chicago, I think, and somebody came up to me with a basket. When you opened the lid, their infant son was in the basket! We took lots of pictures with me and the basket and the little kid in it. But I don't mind that question at all. I'm astounded and immensely flattered that our little film from all those years ago still has legs and still can reach people. I think that's just amazing! 8



## Rob Freese's DISASTER-RAMA!

### CITY ON FIRE! (1979) ♂♂1/2

D: Alvin Rakoff. Barry Newman, Susan Clark, Shelly Winters, Leslie Nielsen, Henry Fonda, Ava Gardner, Johnathan Welsh. 106 mins. (Scorpion Releasing) 8/16

Disturbed chemical plant maintenance worker Herman Stover (Welsh) not only gets passed over for a promotion, his new boss hands him his walking papers, too. Although sweet-natured, Herman cracks and on his way out of the plant he messes with the pressure valves, releasing gallons of toxic, explosive chemicals into the sewer system. Unknown to sewer workers welding pipes, sparks ignite the underground chemicals, creating hundreds of fires throughout the bustling city. Drunk reporter Maggie Grayson (Gardner) stays on the air reporting the escalating destruction for the major networks when she's not hiding in her dressing room crying and sucking gin bottles dry. During the dedication ceremony at the city's new hospital, corrupt mayor William Dudley (Nielsen) tries to deflect both falling debris and accusations that his dirty dealings have compromised the integrity of the new structure. His socialite girlfriend Diana (Clark) is hated by many (including Herman, who shows up at the hospital, and a reporter trying to blackmail her), but she stays to help tend to the wounded and even delivers a baby in the middle of the chaos. Dr. Whitman (Newman) and Nurse Harper (Winters) try to corral the patients, but when the fires begin to burn away all the oxygen, they work with firefighters to create a "water tunnel" by which they can escape to safety—or, at least, the relative safety of not running out of breathable air and spontaneously combusting like one panicked patient who rushes out of the hospital into the airless vacuum. Coming at the very end of the disaster-movie decade that began with 1970's **Airport**, a big-budget, big-studio disaster-rama, the Canadian made **City on Fire!** succeeds in entertaining with a good cast and a lot of great fire stunt work. I'm betting few saw the film during its theatrical run, and then it was all but forgotten the following year when the disaster movies of the '70s were spoofed by the ZAZ team's successful **Airplane!** (with Nielsen goofing on the kind of tough guy he plays here). **City** unfolds like some of Irwin Allen's TV disaster movies, but it is weird for the genre as it was rated R for violence, burn gore and language. Winters gets her moment when she faces down the stubbornly stupid mayor and gives him a piece of her mind. (And she re-creates her "doomed heroine" role from **The Poseidon Adventure**.) Fonda has little to do but try to look worried and wonder when

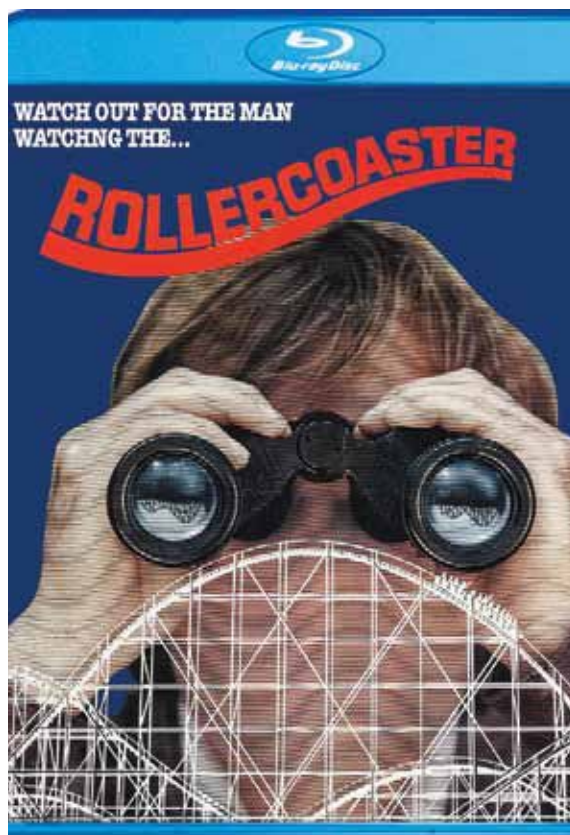
he'll get paid. James Franciscus portrays Gardner's news director. One scene they couldn't get away with today, regardless of the rating, involves three underage kids smoking cigarettes. (And, this being the late '70s, it's probably safe to assume they were smoking real cigarettes.) Legendary filmmaker Jack Hill co-wrote this flick for Rakoff. They teamed the following year for the sea-set fright-fest **Death Ship**. (I wonder if they were original scripts Hill sold that were re-written?) Scorpion's Blu-ray presentation is amazing, no doubt the best the film has ever looked or sounded since its original theatrical release. A vintage TV spot is included. Overall, an enjoyable way to kill a little time.

### ROLLERCOASTER (1977)

♂♂♂1/2

D: James Goldstone. George Segal, Richard Widmark, Timothy Bottoms, Henry Fonda, Susan Strasberg, Helen Hunt. 119 mins. (Shout! Factory) 6/16

An unnamed young man (Bottoms) sets off a bomb on an amusement park rollercoaster, then targets another, seemingly random park for another bombing. Safety inspector Harry Calder (Segal) discovers that the owners of five of the country's biggest amusement parks are meeting in Chicago at the request of the young man. They learn their parks are targeted for more mayhem unless they come up with a million dollars in ransom money. The bomber likes Calder and picks him to be the drop-off man, directing him all over Virginia's King's Dominion Amusement Park, throwing FBI Agent Hoyt (Widmark) and his men off his trail while sending Calder on one throw-up ride after another. Hoyt figures they'll catch the bomber trying to get the money out of the park, but the young man is smarter than anyone thinks and uses one of the FBI vehicles to smuggle out the loot. When he discovers the cash is marked, the bomber contacts Calder to let him know he is going to strike again. When Calder can't convince Hoyt he's going to hit the inaugural run of the brand new Revolution rollercoaster at Six Flags Magic Mountain on the 4th of July, he goes on a hunch and eventually the authorities begin to believe him. It's a showdown to an explosive finish as Calder recognizes the young man's voice in an audio interview given after the Revolution's first run and realizes he put an explosive device directly in the rollercoaster car itself. This is an exciting, immensely entertaining thriller that combines Hitchcock-like suspense with '70s-style disaster-movie mayhem. I enjoy flicks that take place in amusement parks and carnivals, so when you mix in a mad bomber and display an unhealthy regard for human life, there's bound to be a good time to be had by all! **Rollercoaster** doesn't skimp on cheap thrills, and Segal is absolutely pitch perfect as the down-on-his-luck



safety inspector, playing it straight but still having some fun with his character and the situation. (A subplot finds him trying to kick his cigarette habit in an intensely amusing way.) His sparring with cantankerous commissioner Fonda reps another highpoint. Strasberg plays Fran, Calder's new love interest, but she is given little to do and is never in harm's way. (In most films of this type, she would have ended up on the rollercoaster along with the bomb at some point.) Bottoms as the unnamed bomber delivers a smoldering performance. Beneath his calm exterior you know this dude is about to pop at any moment. The flick also marks early screen appearances by Helen Hunt as Calder's daughter, Steve Guttenberg as a park assistant with giant hair, and Craig Wasson as a hippie coaster enthusiast. Glam rockers Sparks show up to belt out their ditties "Fill 'er Up" and "Big Boy." (KISS was supposedly offered the gig but took a pass.) The destruction scenes are excellent and will make you jump in your seat. (It's rumored that in the film's first cut the bloody violence had to be trimmed back as it was deemed too gruesome.) It was the third of four theatrical features from Universal to utilize the Sensurround gimmick, which used low-frequency bass to actually rumble the theater walls. (Devised initially for 1974's **Earthquake**, the process literally shook plaster free from the ceilings of some movie palaces!) Extras include a chat with actor Tommy (Missile to the Moon) Cook, who came up with the initial idea for the movie and got it rolling, the theatrical trailer, and the re-creation of Sensurround so you can keep your neighbors up at night. **Rollercoaster** is a top-notch, big-studio thriller that is sure to get your adrenaline pumping. ♂

## DIGITAL DEBUTS

### ARROW VIDEO

(\$39.95 2-disc Blu-ray + DVD) 7/16

#### SUTURE (1993) B&W 888

D: Scott McGehee, David Siegel. Dennis Haysbert, Mel Harris, Michael Harris, Sab Shimono, David Graf, Dina Merrill. 96 mins.

Co-exec-produced by Steven Soderbergh, lensed in black-and-white, and sporting the look and feel of an offbeat mid-'60s Golden Age of Anxiety thriller (e.g., John Frankenheimer's *Seconds*, Walter Grauman's *Lady in a Cage*) crossed with a feature-length *Twilight Zone* episode, *Suture* hinges its entire premise on a case of mistaken identity between two nearly "identical" brothers—one, Vincent Towers (Michael Harris), rich and a suspected patricidal killer, the other, Clay Arlington (Haysbert), poor and long-lost. The script and direction—McGehee and Siegel share equal screen credit for both—steer us through a fairly entertaining suspenser, an idiosyncratic mix of the surreal and mundane. Where the filmmakers play with audience assumptions and expectations, however, is in the casting: Harris is white; "identical" sibling Haysbert is black; even beyond pigmentation, they share absolutely no resemblance in height, weight, or features—the effect is akin to casting *Twins*' Arnold Schwarzenegger and Danny DeVito in a serious film. Your tolerance for this film-long visual irony will likely determine whether or not you enjoy the ride. Arrow Video, meanwhile, goes all out in lavishing extensive TLC on McGehee and Siegel's cult-worthy feature. Extras include a McGehee and Siegel audio commentary, new interviews with the filmmakers, cast and crew, deleted scenes, trailers, and the auteurs' earlier short film *Birds Past*, an homage to Hitchcock's *The Birds*.

—*The Phantom*

### BLUE UNDERGROUND

(\$29.98 Blu-ray) 6/16

#### CIRCUS OF FEAR (aka PSYCHO CIRCUS) (1966) 888

D: John Llewellyn Moxey. Christopher Lee, Leo Genn, Anthony Newland, Klaus Kinski, Margaret Lee, Suzy Kendall. 90 mins.

This horror flick wannabe is more of a crime caper/murder mystery, but the gloomy settings and the presence of monstrous superstar Lee make *Circus of Fear/Psycho Circus* a film that genre buffs will have more than a passing interest in. Lee spends much of the film wearing a hood made of sackcloth meant to cover his disfigured face. The ac-

tor's deep, booming voice, complete with a thick Russian/German accent, remains highly recognizable. So is Lee the killer who terrorizes Barberini's Circus, or is it someone else? As the mystery unfolds, there are plenty of obvious clues which point to any one of a number of characters—most notably a young and creepy Kinski. The film opens in London. A group of bad guys steals a large stash of cash. One of their comrades is a double-agent policeman, a hothead who kills a fellow officer during the robbery. The bad guys are in trouble. A gang member hides the loot at the circus, and soon the bodies start piling up. Who is the killer? While hardly a masterpiece, *Circus of Fear* is a reasonably complex chiller with an intelligent script and many surprise twists. Produced by schlockmeister Harry Alan Towers, *Circus* is a definite cut above the era's cheapies: the film is a fun thrill ride which often fools viewers into thinking they know who the killer is—until a variety of surprise plot twists alert them otherwise. Genn, as the police inspector who's determined to get his man, is quite good in a role that calls for him to alternate between being elegant and polite one moment, and a no-nonsense Sherlock Holmes the next. Blue Underground presents a fine print of this often neglected film. Moxey, still with us in his 90s, contributes a lively commentary track. The film's theatrical trailer is also included. Blue Underground offers *Circus* as a double bill on a single disc. The co-feature, *Five Golden Dragons*, is a Hong Kong-set crime caper featuring an impressive cast of thespians who were definitely slumming: Along with Lee, Hollywood stars Brian Donlevy, Robert Cummings, George Raft and Dan Duryea are on hand, as is Kinski. Rupert Davies, Lee's costar in Hammer's *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* (1968), is also in the film. Towers produced.

—David-Elijah Nahmod

### CINEMA EPOCH

(\$24.98 DVD)

#### BUTTERFLY (1981) 888

D: Matt Cimber. Pia Zadora, Stacy Keach, Orson Welles, Lois Nettleton, Edward Albert, Stuart Whitman, James Franciscus. 107 mins.

If you're one of those guys who, back in the day, dreamed of having a Pia Zadora installed in his home, then *Butterfly* is the movie for you. In Matt Cimber's (nee Matteo Ottaviano) absurdist adaptation of James M. (*The Postman Always Rings Twice*) Cain's 1930s-set novel, Pia is nothing short of pitch-perfect as Kady Tyler, a lively little jailbait lust bunny who seeks to reunite with her hermetic absentee pappy Jess (Keach) in the hopes of prying a few silver nuggets from the all-but-deserted desert mine it's his lonely job to guard. The irrepressible nymphette—clothes behave like they have no business being on her—likewise looks to seduce dear



old dad in a bid to further cement their burgeoning bond. Further complicating the increasingly crowded picture are the separate arrivals of Kady's wealthy fiance (Albert), older sister Janey (Ann Dane), long-estranged alcoholic mom Belle (Nettleton), and notorious local ne'er-do-well Moke (Franciscus), who's got schemes of his own in the works. It's all a committed recluse can do to keep his wits about him and, in the course of Jess's growing confusion, abrupt and senseless violence along with charges of flagrant incest ensue, leading to a lengthy courtroom conclusion presided over by a bombastic Welles, in full incurable ham mode as one hoot of cantankerous old-coot judge. While *Butterfly* rarely makes for smooth sailing, from its sometimes awkward staging down to its ludicrous final reveal, it's an absolute must for Zadora adorers. (And if that's not inducement enough, Ed McMahon cameos as Pia's prospective father-in-law.) Cinema Epoch's DVD comes complete with an excellent in-depth 44-minute 2008 featurette gathering candid interviews with stars Pia and Keach, as well as filmmaker Cimber and producer (and former Mr. Zadora) Meshulam Riklis. Pia completists, meanwhile, can continue their explorations with Peter Sasdy's notorious 1983 Hollywood-set Harold Robbins screen translation *The Lonely Lady* (Universal Studios VHS), the truly terrible 1987 sci-fi/musical/comedy combo *Voyage of the Rock Aliens* (Prism VHS, German import Blu-ray), wherein Pia duets with Jermaine Jackson on their inspirational international hit "When the Rain Begins to Fall," John Waters' 1988 *Hairspray* (New Line), where she contributes a cool cameo as a beatnik chick, and the ZAZ Team's *Naked Gun 33 1/3: The Final Insult* (Paramount), where Ms. Z makes a good-naturedly self-mocking appearance as "Herself."

—*The Phantom*



## BEST OF THE WEST!

### KINO LORBER FILMS

(\$29.95 Blu-ray) 7/16

#### RAWHIDE (1951) B&W ♂♂♂

D: Henry Hathaway. Tyrone Power, Susan Hayward, Hugh Marlowe, Dean Jagger, Jack Elam, Edgar Buchanan, George Tobias. 86 mins.

A claustrophobic semi-alfresco hostage western in the grand '50s tradition of Budd Boetticher's **The Tall T**, Andre de Toth's **Day of the Outlaw** (VS #67), Charles Marquis Warren's **The Black Whip**, and Tarantino's recent genre revival **The Hateful Eight** (VS #99), **Rawhide** finds greenhorn way station agent Tom Owens (Power) with his untried hands full when four fugitives, led by Marlowe (who would essentially reverse roles with Tyrone as the hero in the above-cited **The Black Whip**) commandeer his HQ. Hayward's single adoptive mother Vinnie Holt ultimately proves a far more charismatic character than Power's Tom and actually puts up a better battle against the bad guys. Elam turns in superlatively scary work as the psycho of the group (according to a bonus featurette, **Susan Hayward: Hollywood's Straight Shooter**, Elam got the gig when Hayward didn't take kindly to original actor Everett Sloane's womanhandling ways). The film includes one particularly rough scene that sees Elam shoot bullets near Vinnie's toddler daughter, a scene that prefigured the endangered baby sequence in Wes Craven's **The Hills Have Eyes** and the tyke-toss in **No Escape**. This, naturally, only serves to further flame Vinnie's combative fire. **Rawhide** also reflects the WWII platoon element that crept into many postwar oaters featuring cavalry troops, posses or outlaw gangs, forcing disparate personalities into one contentious unit that struggles to keep sight of its common goal. Jagger's Yancy is an especially interesting character, an easily distracted gang member who's more interested in music than outlawry and ultimately simply wanders off (!). Buchanan reprises his patented feisty coot persona, while frequent Republic western near-lookalike thesp, James Millican and Jean-Louis Heydt, confusingly sit side by side during a dinner scene. Withal, director Hathaway, veteran scripter Dudley Nichols, cinematographer Milton Krasner, composer Sol Kaplan and a more-than-capable cast combine their skills to craft a superior noir western. Two miscues on Kino's Blu-ray case: the date (1943) and running time (75 mins.) apply to the label's companion western classic, William A. Wellman's **The Ox-Bow Incident**. Kino also

issues the Blu-ray debut of one of Power's signature star vehicles, the 1940 Old California-set swashbuckler **The Mark of Zorro**, complemented by a 1996 **Biography** episode devoted to Tyrone's tragically truncated life.

### OLIVE FILMS

(\$29.95 Blu-ray each) 7/16, 6/16

#### GUN THE MAN DOWN (1956) B&W ♂♂1/2

D: Andrew V. McLaglen. James Arness, Angie Dickinson, Emile Meyer, Robert Wilke, Harry Carey Jr., Don Megowan, Michael Emmet. 76 mins.

**Gun** likewise exudes a scent of noir in a bitter tale of frontier revenge. When reluctant outlaw Rem Anderson (newly minted Matt Dillon Arness, of growing **Guns** stardom) is wounded during a botched bank robbery and abandoned by cohorts Rankin (Wilke) and Farley (Megowan, of future **Creation of the Humanoids** fame), he's caught and sentenced to a year in stir. Upon his release, Rem tracks the treacherous two-some to a dusty, broiling town, where Rankin used his ill-gotten gains to open a saloon. There, Rem meets up with a former paramour, bar babe Janice (Dickinson), leading to further complications. Wryly observing the intrigues, meanwhile, are sage, prairie-wise Sheriff Morton (Meyer) and impressionable young Deputy Lee (Carey Jr.). One of John Wayne's Batjac Productions more modest enterprises, **Gun** boasts a script co-written by Burt Kennedy that feels like a rehearsal for the great Randolph Scott films (**The Tall T**, **Comanche Station**, et al) he would fashion with expert outdoor director Budd Boetticher. The themes and frank, naturalistic dialogue are there but in nascent, half-developed form, unaided by Wayne protege Andrew V. (Son of John Ford regular Victor) McLaglen's competent but pedestrian direction. (Actor Carey Jr. and **Cheyenne Autumn** cinematographer William H. Clothier further reinforce the Ford connection.) Arness is expectedly strong as the resolute Rem, while future AIP stalwart Emmet (**Night of the Blood Beast**, **Attack of the Giant Leeches**) contributes a striking perf as Billy Deal, one of the many black-clad sociopathic gunslingers popular in the day (later revisited by Jack Nicholson's Billy Spear in Monte Hellman's 1966 classic **The Shooting**). On its own **Gun** may be only middling but as a prelude to the upcoming Boetticher-Kennedy masterworks, it reps fascinating viewing.

—*The Phantom*

#### THE RETURN OF A MAN CALLED HORSE (1976) ♂♂♂

D: Irvin Kershner. Richard Harris, Gale Sondergaard, Geoffrey Lewis, William Lucking, Jorge Luke, Jorge Russek. 129 mins.

Years ago, I walked into the room, turned on the TV and saw a man hanging from his chest—to be



precise, his pectorals had been sliced, eagle talons had been threaded through flesh and tied to leather thongs—Richard Harris twisting in the throes of ecstatic agony, alive to the mysteries of S&M spirituality. I love this tale of English aristocrat Lord John Morgan captured in 1825 by the Yellow Hand Sioux, beaten and denigrated, led with a rope around his neck **Cabeza de Vaca**-style, who, instead of hating his captors, becomes their chief. **A Man Called Horse** (1972), based on a 1950 short story by Dorothy M. Johnson, succeeds on all levels as an epic masterpiece; it was also one of the first films to portray Native Americans from the perspective of their own culture. As **Return** opens, Lord Morgan, at home in his English manor for only three years, suffers from Greystoke Syndrome; he's in a Christian church, aching to get his chest ripped open again. **The Return of a Man Called Horse** begins with grand promise: spellbinding cinematography, tone, mood, and scenery. After Morgan dismounts in a French trading fort to discover his former tribe massacred, the survivors enslaved, the promise dissolves, and **Return** morphs into a respectable action film. Harris is marvelous; his role is not magical. Curiously, the Yellow Hand tribe, mostly women and old men, has lost the will to resist. Harris must rejuvenate them as well as devise all the ruses to trick the rogue traders to their doom. Head trader Zenas (Lewis) is convincingly louché; the fort scenes show a nice counterpart to Indian life. But within the fighting—and there's plenty of it—the heart of the film is a paean to the original: the lavish scenes of Horse's addiction to the Sun Vow ritual which he teaches to young warriors-to-be and the medicine man's self-blinding. **Return of a Man Called Horse** is thinner but it's highly entertaining. Missing from the sequel, Iron Eyes Cody. ♂

—Nancy Naglin

Rob Freese's  
**BEST OF THE  
SPAGHETTI WEST**

**CODE RED**  
(\$19.95 DVD)

**A LONG RIDE FROM HELL** (1968)

♫♫1/2

D: Camillo Bazzoni (as Alex Burks). Steve Reeves, Wayne Preston, Guido Lollobrigida, Mimmo Palmara, Rosalba Neri, Aldo Sambrell, Ivan Scratuglia. 91 mins.

While pursuing cattle stolen from their ranch, Mike Sturges (Reeves) and his little brother (Scratuglia) are falsely arrested for a train heist and sent to Yuma State Prison. There, Mike is pressed into hard labor while his brother is tortured in so many ways it's amazing the little fella didn't go belly-up sooner. Escaping the prison, Mike beats a path of vengeance to the doors of the men responsible for framing him and his brother. He quickly realizes how far-reaching his vengeance will be, as even corrupt lawmen were a part of the deception. Reeves does well in what, unfortunately, became his final film role. He was forced into early retirement after performing too many stunts over his years in the picture business. He also co-wrote the script. Sambrell appears as a Mexican bounty hunter. The beautiful Neri isn't on screen nearly enough. Code Red offers a new HD master, showcasing the film in probably the best presentation it's ever had. Also incorporated are the extras produced for the previous Wild East edition, including an interview with Mimmo Palmara, still galleries, trailer and a featurette where members of the Steve Reeves fan club visit his home for a chat about his career (not really an interview proper). For copies, see: [codered.com](http://codered.com)

**WILD EAST PRODUCTIONS**

(\$19.95) 4/16

**MAY GOD FORGIVE YOU, I WON'T**

(1968) ♫♫♫

D: Vincenzo Musolino (as Glenn Vincent Davis). George Ardisson, Anthony Ghidra, Christina Iosani, Pedro Sanchez, Luigi Pavese. 93 mins.

Cjamango (Ardisson) arrives at his ranch only to find his family butchered by the Smart Brothers, a band of no-goods hired by rival rancher Stuart (Pavese) to wipe out the McDonald family. After the job is done, Dick Smart (Ghidra) turns the tables on Stuart and murders him. When Cjamango begins seeking vengeance for his family, the Smarts take him captive and torture the snot out of him. After he escapes, he borrows a machine gun and goes after the not-so-Smart bros. Conceived as a sequel to the previous year's



surprise hit **Cjamango**, starring Ivan Rassimov (appearing as Sean Todd) and directed by Eduardo Mulargia (under the nom de cinema Edward G. Muller), this is pretty much a straight-shooting revenge tale with copious gunfights and some humor from sidekick Sanchez (real name Ignazio Spalla) who sports some roving eyes while comforting a bosomy, grief-stricken widow. Ardisson and Ghidra (real name Dragomir Bojanic-Gidra) are well matched as archenemies. Fast-moving and exciting.

**MASSACRE AT CANYON GRANDE** (1964)

♫♫

D: Albert Band, Sergio Corbucci. James Mitchum, Jill Powers, George Ardisson, Burt Nelson, Giacomo Rossi Stuart. 89 mins.

After chasing down the men who murdered his father, former sheriff Wes Evans (Mitchum) returns to the town of Ariba Mesa to settle down and get married. Unfortunately, he learns that his beloved Nancy (Powers), thinking he was dead, has wed hothead rancher Tully Dancer (Ardisson). His friend Cooley (Rossi Stuart) has taken over as sheriff during his absence and figures Wes will want his tin star back, but he doesn't. Wes is obsessed with getting Nancy back and acts as a moderator between Tully and rival rancher Harley Whitmore (Vladimir Medar), but words don't settle disputes in the Wild West, bullets do! This is an okay oater. It has a very average, American look. Mitchum does fine in the hero role, but his sleepy eyes (which he inherited from his father, Robert Mitchum) make him look kind of bored with the proceedings. It's always great catching up with Rossi Stuart, who was in so many classic European flicks, particularly Mario Bava's **Kill, Baby, Kill**. Actually, the film's behind-the-scenes speculations offer more thrills than anything on-screen, as Band is the sole director credited on the film but many sources say Corbucci took over directing chores early in the production and credit it as his first true directing gig. Corbucci has gentlemanly denied this, saying he only directed a handful of sequences. He is credited as co-scripter under the Americanized name Stanley Corbett. Band takes a producing credit under his real name, Alfredo Antonini. Although it's not the most exciting spaghetti western ever made (it was shown all over the world and played for years), it is an important part of pastaland western history as it gave a start to one of the great practitioners of the genre, regardless of his true contribution. The remastered flicks are accompanied by picture galleries, trailers, deleted scenes and an interview with George Ardisson. ♫

Tim Ferrante's  
**SCORING  
SESSION**

**SOUNDTRACKS GONE GO-GO-WILD!**

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**Production Music Mayhem!**

Lots to report, so let's go-go! Some creative marketing in evidence at La-La Land Records with its unique 12" single featuring **Star Trek: TOS** (1966) main title themes from seasons one and three. The disc is die-cut into the iconic Starfleet insignia shape and pressed on 180-gram gold-colored vinyl. The pricey \$24.95 platter is limited to 1701 copies (1701...get it?). USA Network's **Mr. Robot** (2015) has a cyber-conspiracy score by Mac Quayle that's available via a 2-CD set on the Lakeshore label, whilst the UK's Invada label delivers a four-LP, two-volume white vinyl version. Quayle's spot-on backgrounds for hallucinogenic hacker Elliot Alderson are Emmy-nominated. Continuing the online vibe, production music buffs are known to upload fan-identified and assembled "scores" for movies and shows that are tracked with preexisting library music. David Cronenberg's **Rabid** (1977) and the animated cartoon series **Ren & Stimpy** (1991) are examples of this clandestine effort. Vombis Records goes the legit route with its vinyl-only soundtrack for **Last House on Dead End Street** (1972), a score comprised of culled cues from the legendary KPM music library. Alan Hawkshaw, Ron Geesin and others are among the composers. "Make America APE Again" is the mantra behind the black-and-yellow split vinyl reissue of Jerry Goldsmith's **Planet of the Apes** (1968) via the Mondo label. Its 1000-copy pressing assures the 2-LP set will quickly sell out. More vinyl from the Silva Screen label with Jerry Fielding's excellent music for Michael Winner's suspense chiller **The Nightcomers** (1971). A surprising nugget from Spain's Saimel label arrives in the form of Carlo Rusichelli's 20-minute score for Giorgio Ferroni's WWII action entry **The Battle of El Alamein** (1968). It's a premiere release in any form, sharing its CD space with Rusichelli's lengthier music for another Italo WWII film, **Un giorno da Leoni** (1961). Meanwhile, Jeremiah Bornfield's music for Kent Jones' **Hitchcock/Truffaut** (2015) documentary is available as a download-only from CD Baby and iTunes. The composer's music includes an occasional clever whiff of Bernard Herrmann, the longtime Hitchcock collaborator who also scored Truffaut's **Fahrenheit 451** (1966). The Dragon's Domain label premieres Duke Ellington's jazzy treatment for **Assault on a Queen** (1966), rescued from the monaural music stems. It's a limited edition CD of 1000 copies. Ellington's smooth and swinging notes make for perfect pairing with a single cask bourbon. Trust me on that one. \*hic\* ♫



## DIGITAL DEBUTS

### CRITERION COLLECTION

(\$39.95 Blu-ray) 9/16

#### BEYOND THE VALLEY OF THE DOLLS (1970) ♂♂♂♂

D: Russ Meyer. Dolly Read, John La Zar, Cynthia Myers, Marcia McBroom, Charles Napier, Erica Gavin, Michael Blodgett, Harrison Page, Edy Williams. 109 mins.

For the sheer power of its lowlife-affirming vision, **Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!** rates as the Russ Meyer movie yours truly would want with him were he stranded on a desert isle. Running a close second is the deservedly vaunted non-sequel **Beyond the Valley of the Dolls**. Scripted by future tele-critic Roger Ebert from a story he co-concocted with Meyer, **Beyond** bids the viewer to "come with the gentle people" on a cross-country odyssey to Hollywood Hell. Like the Jackie Susann campfest **Valley of the Dolls** (likewise granted the gala Blu-ray treatment by Criterion), **Beyond** crams its mock-cautionary cinematic canvas with harrowing portraits, presented in Boschian detail, of bright young lives ruined by their sudden immersion in showbiz decadence. Some—the lucky ones—are pulled back from the brink with only moments to spare; for others, violent death is the only way out. Several timeless performances elevate **Beyond**: McBroom and ex-Playmates Read and Myers as the femme rock combo The Carrie Nations; future best-selling novelist Blodgett as callous gigolo Lance Rock; Williams as anything-goes gal Ashley St. Ives; La Zar as the ever-eloquent Z-Man Barzell; and, of course, the Strawberry Alarm Clock as themselves. Criterion's lavish valentine includes a wealth of bonus material, some of it carried over from 20th Century Fox's 2-disc 2006 DVD Special Edition: two audio commentaries—a 2003 track by the late Ebert and a 2006 cast commentary with Read, Myers, Gavin, Page, and La Zar—plus an interview with auteur/admirer John Waters, archival Russ Meyer interviews, a 1990 cast Q&A, five 2006 making-of documentaries, trailers and TV spots. Essential eye candy and campy goodness galore.

—*The Phantom*

### KINO LORBER

(\$29.95 Blu-ray) 7/16

#### FIVE MILES TO MIDNIGHT (1963)

B&W ♂♂♂♂

D: Anatole Litvak. Sophia Loren, Anthony Perkins, Gig Young, Jean-Pierre Aumont. 110 mins.

Henri (**Beauty and the Beast**) Alekan's atmospheric black-and-white cinematography, particularly of Paris when it drizzles, constitutes the chief virtue of this sub-Clouzot

caper. Sort of a chattier, less violent Norman Bates, Perkins' Bob Macklin is an American swindler in Paris whose marriage to beautiful mate Lisa (Loren) is on extremely shaky ground. When Bob alone survives a fatal plane crash, he embroils a reluctant Lisa in a scheme to conceal said survival and cash in on his flight insurance policy. Most of the film charts Bob's not very suspenseful efforts to remain undetected in the couple's apartment, efforts constantly undermined by a pesky American tyke who spies him from his flat across the courtyard but buys Bob's alibi that he's hiding out from gangsters. Lisa, meantime, is continually hit on by yet another American, swinging bachelor journalist David Barnes (Young), whose professional sniffer likewise senses that something's amiss. **Five Miles** picks up when Alekan's camera follows the otherwise thin characters on their outdoor rounds, capturing a noirish, low-glam City of Lights marked by decaying buildings, humble bars and shops, and shadowy streets, an ambience further accentuated by Mikis (Serpico) Theodakis' evocative score. While **Five Miles** may come up short in the thrills department, Kino's widescreen Blu-ray remains a treat for the eyes and ears. Slim extras include an alternate French scene (from early in the picture) and trailer gallery.

#### REALLY WEIRD TALES (1987) ♂♂♂♂

D: Don McBrearty, John Blanchard, Paul Lynch. John Candy, Joe Flaherty, Catherine O'Hara, Martin Short, Olivia d'Abo, John Hemphill. 85 mins. (\$19.95 DVD) 6/16

Three years after the brilliant, station-hopping **SCTV** series aired its final season on Cinemax, parent cable channel HBO commissioned this tripartite takeoff on **The Twilight Zone**, showcasing four former **SCTV** regulars. While not quite scaling the peaks of the series' top parodies, the resultant **Really Weird Tales** still rates as solid **SCTV** material, with Flaherty and O'Hara both contributing to the writing. Onscreen, Flaherty basically reprises his **Monster Chiller Horror Theater** host Count Floyd, albeit in civilian garb, as your tour guide through that mysterious portion of the brain that brings us...**Really Weird Tales**. Tale #1, **Cursed with Charisma**, finds Candy in fine form as the Johnny LaRue-like Howard Jensen, a **Music Man**-type stranger who (in a portent of the 2008 **Housing Scandals**) bamboozles depressed small-town folk into falling for his get-rich-quick real-estate scams. In **I'll Die Loving**, O'Hara plays Theresa Sharpe, a convent-raised orphan and complaint department worker who suffers from a different curse—if she loves someone, the object of her affection explodes (a similar riff was echoed in the 1987 feature **Nice Girls Don't Explode**). Short shines as Shucky, an on-the-make lounge singer who scores a coveted gig at an ersatz **Playboy** Mansion with a Stepford twist in the funniest episode, **All's Well That Ends Strange**. Kino's DVD arrives sans extras, but rates as a must for **SCTV** aficionados who might have missed it the first time around.



### MILL CREEK ENTERTAINMENT

(\$14.98 Blu-ray)

#### THE 5,000 FINGERS OF DR. T (1953)

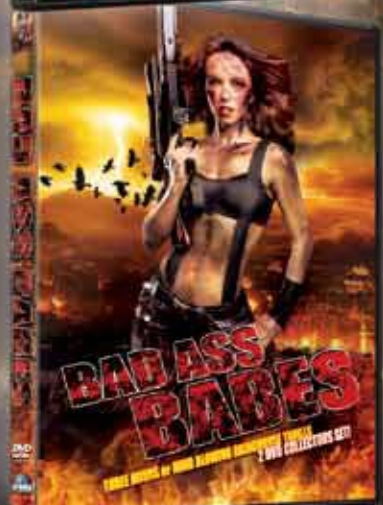
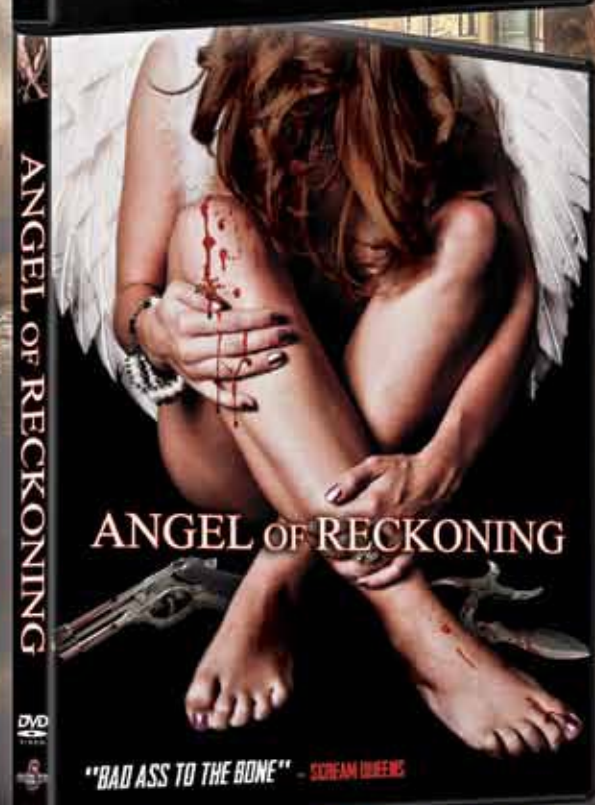
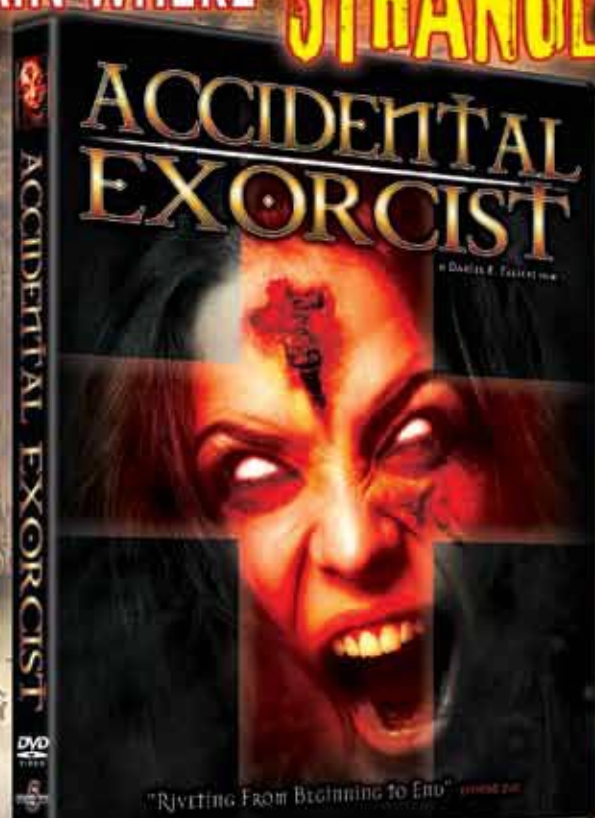
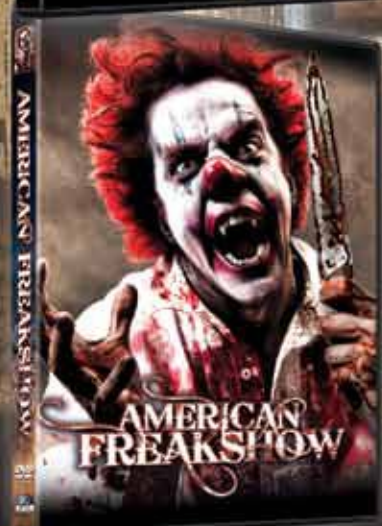
♂♂♂♂

D: Roy Rowland. Hans Conreid, Tommy Rettig, Peter Lind Hayes, Mary Healy, Henry Kulky. 88 mins. (\$14.98 Blu-ray) 6/16

The only expressionist Hollywood musicomedy scripted by Dr. Seuss, this 1953 bizarritty casts future **Lassie** costar Rettig as a hapless youth tormented by his tyrannical piano teacher, the eponymous Dr. T, flamboyantly interpreted by Conreid. A kind of kiddie-matinee variation on **Dante's Inferno**, most of the pic is an extended nightmare sequence that finds our young protagonist a prisoner at the "Happy Fingers Institute," where Dr. T plans to install him and 499 other unlucky lads at a giant wraparound piano at which they'll "practice 24 hours a day, 365 days a year." Help arrives in the form of plumber Hayes (who prefers to identify himself as an "independent contractor"), who assists Tom and his brainwashed mom (Healy, Hayes' real-life wife and longtime showbiz partner). **5,000 Fingers** offers campy humor, deranged ditties, much fancy (and often effete) footwork, and some of the most surrealistic sets seen on celluloid since Caligari last unlocked his closet. Highlights include a tour of Dr. T's basement penal colony and a hooded dungeonmaster's dirge-like ode to the grim joys of "ankle chains and nooses of the finest rope." If any film begged for Blu-ray treatment, it's this candy-colored confection, and we commend Mill Creek for ably taking on that task. 1953, meantime, proved a major year for films dealing with anxious tykes suffering nightmares in which they're forced to face fanciful fascistic authority figures; for a full evening of totally destabilizing retro fun watch **5,000 Fingers** back to back to back with **Invaders from Mars**, where young Jimmy Hunt confronts a tentacled fishbowl alien out to brainwash Earthlings, and, of course, **Robot Monster**, where little Gregory Moffat conspires to defeat our beloved diving-helmeted intergalactic gorilla Ro-Man. Prepare for sleepless nights!

—*The Phantom*

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## SHOUT! FACTORY

(\$27.99 Blu-ray) 6/16

### THE CRUSH (1993) ♂♂♂

D: Alan Shapiro. Cary Elwes, Alicia Silverstone, Jennifer Rubin, Kurtwood Smith, Gwynneth Walsh, Matthew Walker. 89 mins.

**The Crush** shapes up as both a fairly tense, relatively nonviolent thriller and, in time-honored exploitation tradition, a legit DOMB (i.e., Dirty Old Man's Delight). Elwes stars as a not-so-dirty, not-too-old (28 we're told) journalist who rents a cottage in back of an opulent 'burb home, where he soon becomes the unwitting lust object of 14-year-old wacko Darian (Silverstone), a fetching blond nymphette in a vintage Drew Barrymore mode. At first flattered by the bright, buxom teen's untoward attention, Nick offers only token resistance to what he considers a harmless flirtation at worst. Darian, in turn, demonstrates her affection by breaking into Nick's computer and polishing his copy. ("You have such a terrible time with the objective case," she seductively explains. "Your split infinitives put such stress on your adverbs.") So adroit an editor is she that Nick's moved up the ladder at prestigious *People*-like *Peep* magazine (!). When Nick more emphatically rejects Darian's increasingly bold overtures, she resorts to more drastic reprisals, like siccing a nest of wasps on his new photographer squeeze Amy (Rubin). Darian's affluent parents (Smith, Walsh), meanwhile, see no evil in their precocious offspring, even though an earlier "crush" ended up mysteriously deceased. Elwes is effective as the bemused writer forced to battle pressing deadlines and crazed Lolitas alike. Former **RoboCop** villain Smith adds a jovially sinister spin as Darian's dad, and Silverstone performs ably under the scrutiny of auteur Shapiro's discreetly leering lens. As an entry in the Loony Lolita genre, one then-newly regenerated by "Long Island Lolita" Amy Fisher's real-life escapades, **The Crush** achieves its sleazy aims with deadpan wit and efficiency. Shout! Factory's new Blu-ray edition includes an audio commentary by writer/director Shapiro, an interview with actors Smith (**The Doting Father**) and Rubin (**Stung by Love**), along with trailer and TV spot.

### RAISING CAIN (1992) ♂♂1/2

D: Brian De Palma. John Lithgow, John Lithgow, John Lithgow, John Lithgow, John Lithgow, Lolita Davidovich, Frances Sternhagen, Steven Bauer, Mel Harris. 95 mins. (\$34.95 2-disc Blu-ray) 9/16

It's Mondo Lithgow time: After his Anthony Hopkins/Hannibal Lecter impersonation in the previous year's dud **Ricochet**, future **3rd Rock from the Sun** tele-star Lithgow plays fully five—count 'em—five loonies here: child psychologist Carter Nix; his own sinister brother Cain; their sadistic Norwegian

behavioral scientist dad; a juvenile alter ego named Josh; and, in his first drag performance since **The World According to Garp**, the domineering Margo. While Lithgow gives each part his all, our fave moment arrives when Dad tells evil son, "Shut up and finish your drink!" Alas, **Raising Cain** is less a coherent black comedy thriller than a succession of cheap fright tricks that hit and miss in roughly equal measure. Some scenes are terrific, such as a long tracking shot that follows shrink Sternhagen as she delivers a mobile, breathlessly verbose analysis of the senior Dr. Nix. Others are calculatingly sick, as when Bauer's terminal cancer patient wife suffers a cardiac arrest upon seeing her spouse making out with doc Davidovich. The best shock arrives last, lending the film the feel of a 95-minute set-up for a two-second punch line. (At least it's *good* one.)

## VINEGAR SYNDROME

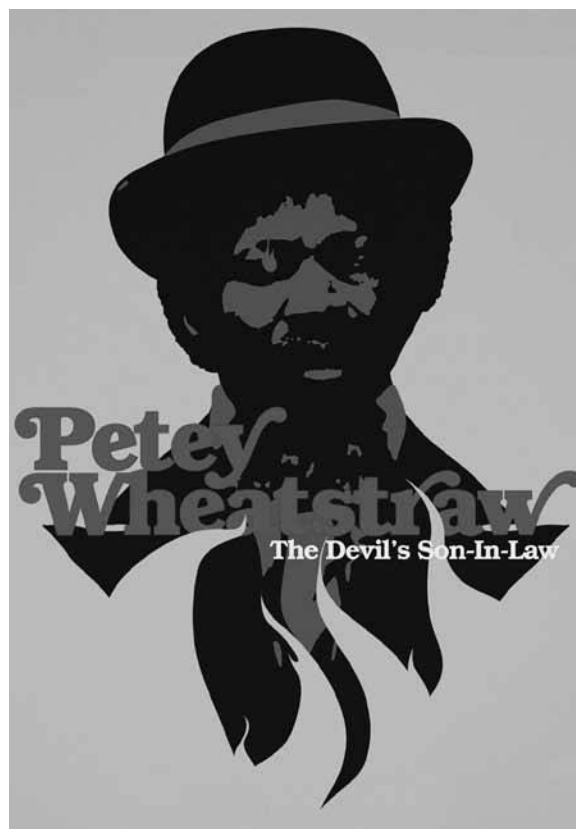
(\$29.98 2-disc Blu-ray + DVD) 7/16

### PETEY WHEATSTRAW: THE DEVIL'S SON-IN-LAW (1977)

♂♂♂

D: Cliff Roquemore. Rudy Ray Moore, Jimmy Lynch, Leroy Daniels, Ernest Mayhand, Ebony Wright, G. Tito Shaw, Wildman Steve. 99 mins.

Redoubtable blaxploitation parody pioneer, popular stand-up comic, and notorious party record roue Rudy Ray Moore introduced his mock-macho urban hero Dolemite in the 1975 movie of the same name. Rudy Ray reprised his Dolemite persona in the farcical follow-up **The Human Tornado** (aka **Dolemite 2: The Human Tornado**), another film that mixed his lady-killing antics with slapstick kung-fu schtick and superheroics of the most outrageous sort. Moore, who often co-produced and contributed to the storylines, could be counted on to work in some of his standup routines, most notably his protorap rhyming riffs. (Contrary to popular belief, it was Rudy Ray—not Benjamin Franklin—who first coined the phrase "Romance without finance is a damned nuisance.") Rudy's arguably best effort, however—the supernatural spoof **Petey Wheatstraw: The Devil's Son-in-Law**—sees Moore drop his Dolemite character to portray kung-fu-trained comic Petey Wheatstraw (presumably in honor of the late, great bluesman of the same name). We know from the get-go that Petey is not your average dude. Not only is he born at roughly age 7 (!) but he beats up the doctor who tries to treat him to the traditional postpartum spanking. Our story fast-forwards to the present, when Petey has become a standup superstar. Rival funnymen Leroy (Daniels) and Skillet (Mayhand) will literally kill to keep Petey from competing with their own planned stage extravaganza—one funded by local honky hoods headed by the menacing Mr. White (George



Mireless)—which leads to a church-front massacre that counts Petey among the fatalities. (Mixing realistically rendered screen violence with wacky comedy was long a Rudy Ray trademark.) A dapper devil (Shaw) intervenes and makes the expired Petey an offer he can't refuse: life, success, and magic powers in return for marrying Lucifer's ugly daughter (!). It's at this point that this offbeat exercise really begins to heat up. Vinegar Syndrome decks out its new Blu-ray with a wealth of special features—the making-of documentary **I, Dolemite Part III**, the featurette **Shooting Locations Revisited**, an audio commentary with Rudy Ray biographer Mark Jason Murray, **Petey** costar Lynch, and director Roquemore, a Rudy Ray trailer gallery and more. Vinegar Syndrome lavishes similarly gala attention on its new **The Human Tornado** Blu-ray, also arriving with a commentary by Murray and Lynch, **I, Dolemite Part II**, an audio interview with director Cliff Roquemore and martial arts champion Howard Jackson, the complete German-dubbed version of the film (**Der Bastard**), soundtrack, trailers and more. The label likewise offers a deluxe edition of the original **Dolemite** (VS #99). Also new from Vinegar Syndrome is the 1970s blaxploitation double feature **Candy Tangerine Man**, directed by Matt (**Butterfly**) Cimber and starring John Daniels in the title role, and Cimber's **Lady Cocoa**, with singer Lola Falana, Millie Perkins and Gene Washington; extras include a director's video intro for **Candy Tangerine Man**, and a **Lady Cocoa** commentary track with Cimber and director's assistant/actor John Goff. ♂

—The Phantom

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## ABOUT NANCY NAGLIN:

Author, film critic and freelance writer Nancy Naglin has been the Art-House columnist for *The Phantom of the Movies' VideoScope* since 1993. Her work has appeared in numerous publications, including *The New York Daily News*, *New York Magazine*, *The Village Voice* and *Crawdaddy*.

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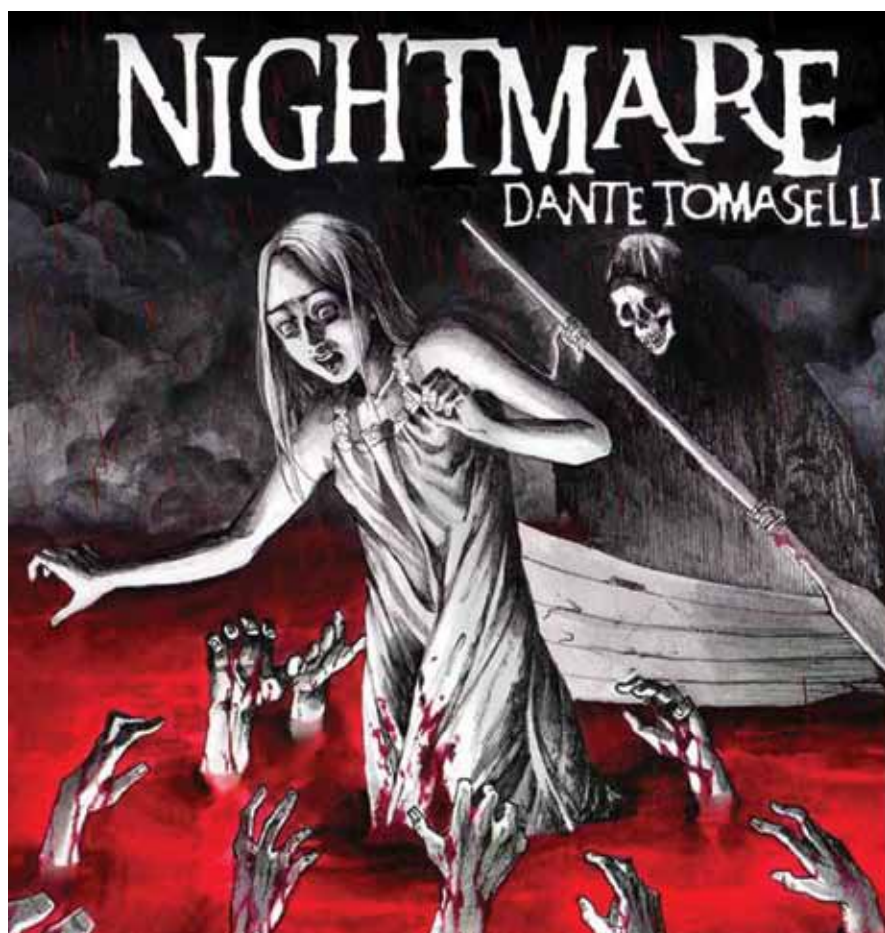


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## PHANTOM BOOKSHELF

**THE QUICK, THE DEAD AND THE REVIVED** *The Many Lives of the Western Film* by Joseph Maddrey. McFarland & Co., Inc. Softcover. 204 pages. \$29.95

'Twas several issues ago when The Phantom himself assigned yours truly to review the excellent video doc, **Nightmares in Red, White and Blue** (2010). I hadn't heard of its writer/producer Joseph Maddrey but he sure left an impression because he creates and dissects as others don't. Experiencing Maddrey opens one to learning and pondering. He's concise in thought, is firm in his telling and skillfully entertains. So, yeah, I really like what Maddrey does. And when he isn't penning books or shooting documentaries, he's scripting episodes of **A Haunting, Monsters and Mysteries in America** and **Murder Calls**. But it's his love of westerns and their sociological and political substance that inspired him to write this book, a combination of historical documentation, anecdotal remembrances and engaging study of the inner purposes and views these films were designed to convey. Whether dealing with a real-life hero or villain, Hollywood typically portrayed the good guy/bad guy conflict in a morally acceptable frame. The good guy wins. He might die in doing so, but Good always defeats Evil, right? It wasn't always

that way. As Maddrey notes, "Hundreds of films produced in Hollywood during the silent era and throughout the 1930s created a popular misconception of westerns as simple-minded morality plays about Good and Evil." But things began to change around 1939, with the arrival of thematically rich films like John Ford's **Stagecoach** and Henry King's **Jesse James**. "The major westerns of the ensuing years reflect the changing values of twentieth century Americans, by presenting major political issues from a variety of perspectives," the author observes. So what happened? Why were Hollywood filmmakers suddenly interested in making a point? And how was it accomplished? These are the deeper questions Maddrey answers so brilliantly through intensive research, narrative breakdowns, character motives and filmmaker quotes in a captivating work filled with keen observation and significant explanations. It's the western movie genre presented in a most interesting light, and it's Maddrey's intelligent writing that does the shining.

—Tim Ferrante

And 'scope out...frequent **VideoScope** scribe david j. moore's epic new book **The Good, the Tough & the Deadly: Action Movies & Stars 1960s-Present** (Schiffer Publishing, 560 pages)—nearly five pounds (!) of filmic fury packed with reviews, interviews and images galore—and Dusty Sage's profanely illustrated nostalgia tome **Burlesque in a Nutshell** (BearManor Media, 456 pages), filled with all manner of baggy-pants comics and pant-provoking ecdysiasts. ⚡

## End Credits Contributing Writers

⚡David Annandale's latest novels are **The Last Wall** and **The Hunt for Vulkan**, available at [www.blacklibrary.com](http://www.blacklibrary.com).

⚡Dan Cziraky used to "Time Warp" when it wasn't cool or trendy!

⚡Simon Drax is the author of the novel **A Very Fast Descent into Hell**.

⚡The dynamic dad-daughter duo of **Terry & Tiffany DuFoe** operate the award-winning Internet radio station **Cult Radio A-Go-Go!**

⚡Ronald Charles Epstein's book reviews are quoted on Amazon.ca.

⚡Tim Ferrante is carefree...he doesn't care, as long as it's free.

⚡Robert Freese was last seen at The Cosmic Drive-In.

⚡Joe Kane believes that less is more, more or less.

⚡Dwight Kemper is the mastermind behind **Murder For Hire** ([murdermysterytheater.com](http://murdermysterytheater.com)).

⚡Scope out Nancy Naglin's e-books at [cultmachine.com](http://cultmachine.com) and the Amazon Kindle Store.

⚡Follow film critic David-Elijah Nahmod on Facebook and Twitter: @DavidElijahN.

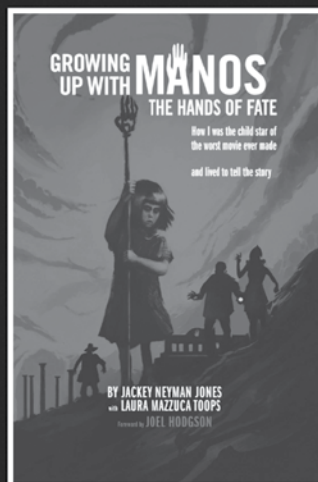
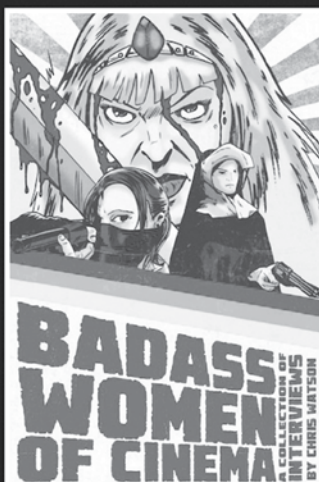
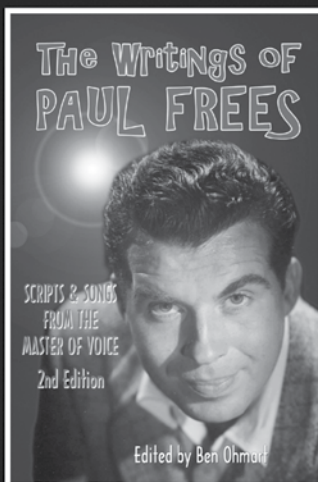
⚡Father/son genre critics **Joseph & Cohen Perry** cover the Korean Film Festival beat.

⚡John Seal's got his motor running.

⚡Don Vaughan is the author of **Reel Tears: The Beverly Washburn Story** (BearManor).

⚡Scott Voisin's **Character Kings 2** is available from BearManor Media.

⚡



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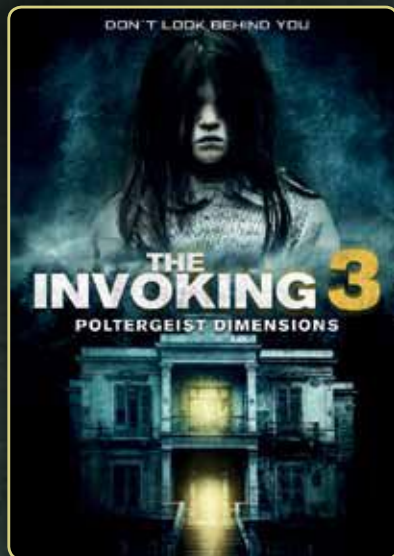


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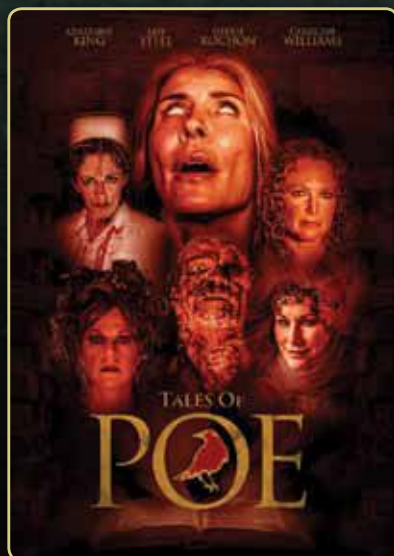
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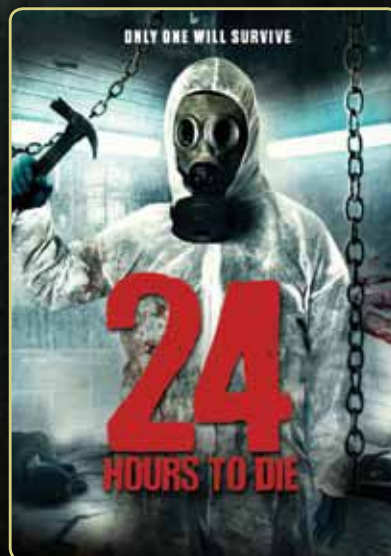
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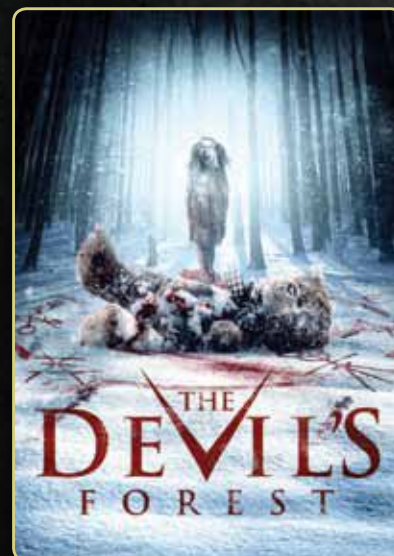
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## PHANTOM PHLASHES!

**HORROR HORIZON:** On the sequel frights front, Warner Home Entertainment leads the way with James Wan's acclaimed spooky follow-up **The Conjuring 2**, with returning paranormal investigators Vera Farmiga and Patrick Wilson. Horrordom's urge to purge continues apace with part three of a popular ongoing franchise, **The Purge: Election Year** (Universal Studios), starring Frank Grillo, Elizabeth Mitchell and Mykelti Williamson, while Asylum extends another apparently undying series, this one from the Syfy Channel, with **Sharknado: The 4th Awakens**. Elsewhere on the fear-film horizon, look for **Fender Bender** (Shout! Factory), **Lights Out** (Warner), and RLJ Entertainment's **Scanners**-style sci-fi/horror hybrid **The Mind's Eye**. Also due: Sarah Hyland and Justin Chon in the occult chiller **Satanic** (Magnet Releasing), Blake Lively in the aquatic terror tale **The Shallows** (Sony Pictures), Eliza Taylor, Emily Wheaton and Penelope Mitchell in the claustrophobic exercise **6 Plots** (Lionsgate), and Kim Hwan-hee in director Na Hong-jin's Korean import **The Wailing** (Well Go USA).

**ACTION UPDATE:** Mel Gibson continues to rule the B action roost with his latest, the **Taken**-type adrenalin rush **Blood Father** (Lionsgate), costarring Erin Moriarty, Diego Luna, William H. Macy and Michael Parks, while Bryan Cranston takes on a powerful drug cartel in Brad Furman's **The Infiltrator** (Broadgreen), featuring Diane Kruger, John Leguizamo, Benjamin Bratt and Amy Ryan, and genre vets Danny Trejo, Luke Goss and Bokeem Woodbine team up in **Night Crew** (E One Entertainment). Winding back the clock a bit, Matthew McConaughey toplines in the fact-based Civil War epic **Free State of Jones** (Universal Studios), Kristofer (Game of Thrones) Hivju gets medieval in the Middle Ages-set adventure **The Last King** (Magnet Releasing), and WWII provides the backdrop for **Beyond Valkyrie: Dawn of the Fourth Reich** (Sony Pictures), with Sean Patrick Flanery, Tom Sizemore, Rutger Hauer and Stephen (Don't Breathe) Lang. Meanwhile, back in the jungle, Edgar Rice Burroughs' enduring nature boy returns to the screen in **The Legend of Tarzan** (Warner Home Entertainment), starring Alexander Skarsgard, Samuel L. Jackson, Margot Robbie and Christoph Walz.

**SCI FI FORECAST:** A young man with a unique condition faces a harsh world in the film-fest fantasy fave **A Better Place** (Monarch Home Entertainment), starring Stephen Todt, while John Cusack and Samuel L. Jackson investigate a techno-zombie threat in the Stephen King adaptation **Cell**, and Ellen Page and Evan Rachel Wood top-line in Patricia Rozema's apocalypse drama **Into the Forest** (both via Lionsgate). ☸

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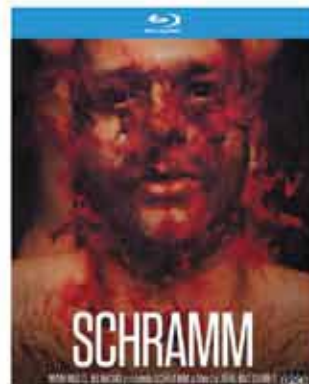
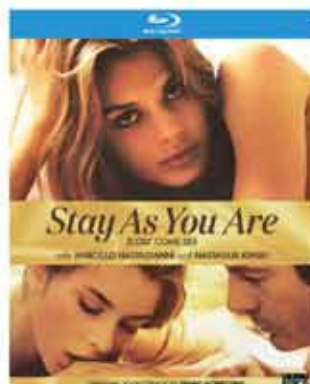
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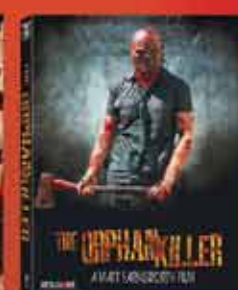
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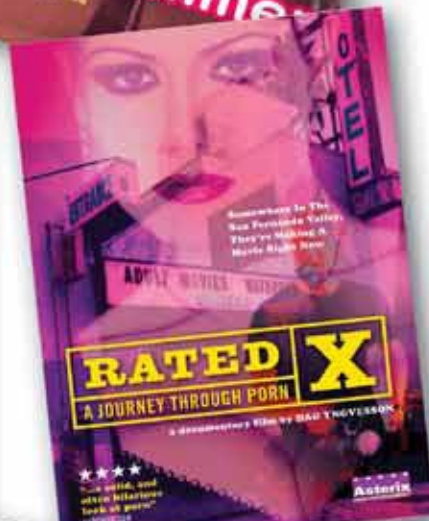
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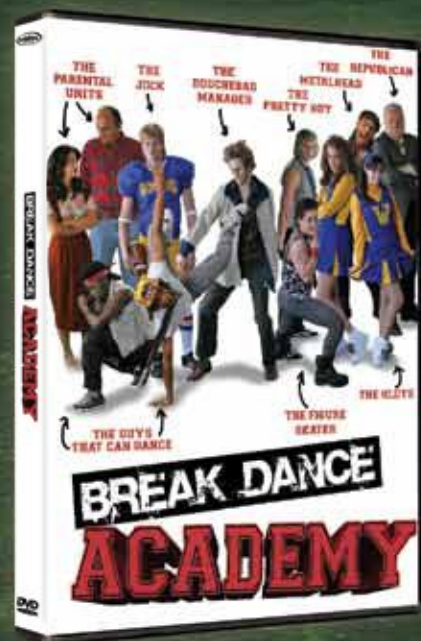
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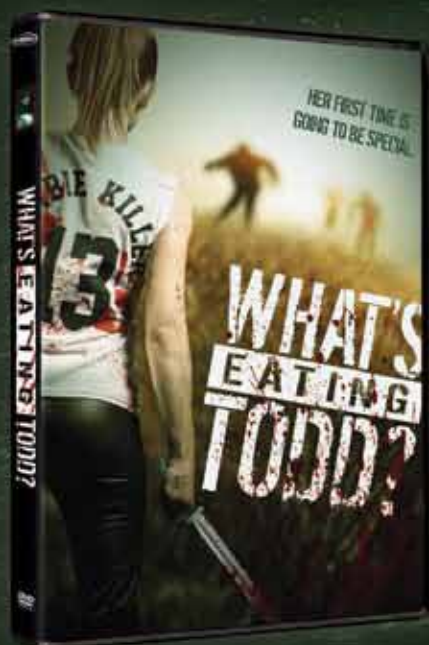
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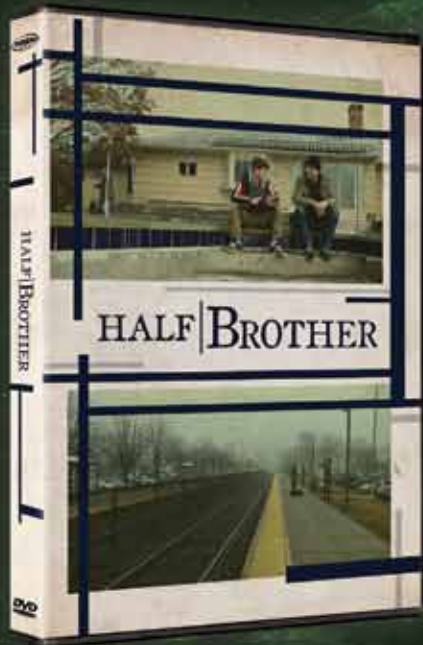
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